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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE WEST INDIES CARIBBEAN QUARTERLY

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Editorial

It is now twelve years since Caribbean Quarterly first appeared. In the very first issue (Vol. I. No. 1) published for the period April-May-June, 1949, the Editors referred to it as follows:

"The Caribbean Quarterly offers to West Indians reliable reading on their own history and culture, and on social developments in the Caribbean. It seeks to enable West Indians to keep in touch with significant cultural and social events elsewhere. It aims at fostering contact between persons and institutions active in the field of culture in the Caribbean area. It presents information concerning the University College of the West Indies, reports on the progress of the Extra-Mural work of the University College and provides study material for that work."

You, our readers, and patient, tolerant subscribers, will have been able to judge whether we have carried out our aim in the past twelve years. We have certainly tried!

We should like to thank our subscribers for waiting on issues which have unfortunately been delæyed, and hope that as from 1962 issues will be published as near as possible to March, June, September and December.

Caribbean Quarterly offers a unique opportunity for members of the College staff and for other members of the Caribbean community to share in the search for truth in the many aspects of Caribbean life.

The Department of Extra-Mural Studies which publishes Caribbean Quarterly has always aimed at creating outside the walls of the University a University spirit of research, informed discussion, clear thinking and deep interest in the problems of the community. The expansion of the facilities of the college itself in terms of two campuses, increase in student members, provision of evening classes for those who work in the day, extension of the range of subjects to include Engineering, Agriculture, Economics, Sociology, &c., increases the responsibility of the Extra-Mural Department in its role of extension, in the interpretation of the University to the people, and the bringing to the West Indian community the results of the search for truth within the walls of the University College.

The Editors invite you to continue to participate with us in the University adventure in the British Caribbean.

Finally, we welcome with gratitude, the following contributors to the journal:—

Doreen Collins, Lecturer in Social Administration at Leeds University.

Dr. R. J. Owens, Lecturer in English at U.C.W.I.

Mr. Willy Richardson, Federal Information Officer and we say thanks again to our old friends—

Michael Smith and Gabriel Coulthard, both Senior Lecturers at U.C.W.I.

Fr. Jesse, the well-known historian of St. Lucia

Professor George Simpson, one-time visiting Professor at U.C.W.I.

West Indian Culture

M. G. SMITH

WHEN people ask "Is there a West Indian Culture?", a monosyllabic answer is rarely adequate. If there is a West Indian culture, we can surely define or at least identify it; if there is not, we should at least say what sort of culture West Indians have. It is also worth understanding why the question is raised at all, and what functions answers of either sort may serve. Instead of presenting a cultural inventory stressing provenience of cultural traits, I shall therefore discuss the factors which underlie this question of cultural identity, as well as the nature of this identity itself.

Alfred Mayer has shown that the culture concept first emerged in Germany and Russia as "a typical ideological expression of the rise of backward societies against the encroachments of the West on their traditional culture". Thus the connection between cultural and political nationalism is evident in the history of this idea. After several decades, Sir Edward Tylor adopted the term culture to denote "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Fifty years later English-speaking anthropologists defined their discipline as the study of culture. Since then, cultural theories and definitions have developed space. In their recent review of these concepts, A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn cite 164 statements of somewhat differing emphases, content and organisation. After analysing these formulas, they conclude that "culture is a product; is historical; includes ideas, patterns, and values; is selective; is learned; is based upon symbols; and is an abstraction from behaviour and the products of behaviour".

There is then no single correct definition of culture, although there is an impressive correspondence among the many academic definitions. The culture concept moreover has two quite distinct functions, each dominant in its own sphere: the ideological and the analytic. Since anthropologists have developed a specialised concept of culture, its meaning for them differs from that generally current; but since social ideas form part of the culture which anthropologists study, they are also concerned with the content, context and functions of cultural ideologies.

Today when colonial peoples are merging to freedom, the connection between culture and nationalism is important but various. Questions of cultural unity and distinctiveness typically emerge within contexts of nationalist action seeking autonomy. Where cultural diversity within the emerging group is too great to be ignored, several alternatives are available. The nationalist movement may claim the people's loyalty for itself on behalf of the state, as in Ghana; or the major cultural divisions within the emerging group may be given important margins of local autonomy, as in Nigeria. Where the "movement" is inter-territorial and the range of cultural diversity is greatest, solidarity may be invoked in racial or metacultural terms. Thus, Pan-

Africanism presently pursues African political unity to fulfil "the African personality". Although an important basis for nationalism, cultural unity is not indispensable after all. Race and Communism offer adequate ideological alternatives.

None the less, cultural distinctiveness has great values for nationalist movements. For a people emerging from tutelage, cultural distinctiveness may be used to justify demands for independence. Cultural homogeneity may also be used to promote political unity. For these reasons, nationalists often employ an ideology of culture to legitimate their movement, its methods and aims. Critics may make counter-charges of cultural diversity and unrepresentative leadership. The uncommitted public is then caught between two sets of conflicting assertions; and their political adherence depends on the answers which they adopt to such questions as, "Have we a separate culture? Are we a distinct nation or people?".

These questions are very much in people's minds in the British West Indies today. Their principal spokesmen are politicians, educators and journalists. "Before the West Indies can emerge as a nation, there must be a common culture We must be West Indians first, and anything else afterwards "4. Chaguaramas is often cited as symbolic of West Indian and Trinidadian nationalism. Nationalism itself has few public critics in the West Indies; but the problems which beset Federation indicate the uncertainty of many West Indians. Within the federated territories themselves, parallel cleavages are often present. To cite a recent article-"The two leading political parties of Trinidad-the People's National Movement and the Democratic Labour Party-are accusing each other of preaching and practising racialism in Trinidad⁵". A nationalist movement may therefore flourish amid conditions of racial tension. Since race and nationalism are ideologies, consistency is essential to neither. The nationalist may invoke the nation during racial strife; the racialist may invoke race solidarity on cultural or other grounds.

For many West Indians, the problem of their cultural identity is unusually acute. As our poets show, the question is often primarily personal. "What are we?" and "Who am I?" go together in this uncertain context. West Indians may intuitively sense something distinctive about themselves and their culture, without being able to define either satisfactorily. Especially because of their political implications, such definitions are unlikely to win a general consensus. West Indians also recognise the cultural diversity within their own and neighbouring territories, without being clear how these differences fit into the larger schemes of national or cultural unity and distinctiveness.

When people ask "Is there a West Indian culture?" the short answer must always be positive. Since culture is a universal human attribute, every local group has a culture. If the group is fairly distinct or has a peculiar habitat, its culture will almost certainly reflect this in some particulars, and even if the group is part of a larger cultural and social unit, it may still be sufficiently distinctive to have its own sub-culture. Thus we can recognise sub-cultural variants of the move general British Caribbean culture in St. Kitt's, Barbuda or Trinidad.

Culture is an abstraction from people's behaviour. As an abstraction, the concept is serviceable to anthropologists and ideologues alike. For the anthropologist, its special importance lies in its patterning or regular standardised forms, its transmissibility as a tradition acquired by learning, and its intimate connections with society. As Nadel says, "Society means the totality of social facts projected onto the dimension of relationships and groupings; culture, the same totality in the dimension of action". Like Nadel, Sir Edward Tylor also defined culture in terms of society.

The West Indies now has a common Federal government, and so by one definition the component units form a single society. Yet it is clear that British Guiana and British Honduras, which do not belong to this policy, are culturally West Indian as much as those units which do. The prospect of Jamaica's forthcoming referendum on its Federal association underlines this point. Should the Jamaicans vote for withdrawal from the Federation, will they cease to be West Indian?

Within the Caribbean, differences of history and metropolitan affiliation intensify local divisions; Guadeloupe and Martinique are no less West Indian than Barbados and Montserrat, but the two groups differ so sharply in consequence of their hi torical metropolitan affiliations that it is illusory at this stage to postulate their common cultural or national identity. Even within the British West Indies-to which I shall limit this discussion-important territorial differences reflect the course of history. Jamaica, St. Kitts, Antigua and Barbados are predominantly Protestant by virtue of unbroken British rule; St. Lucia, Grenada, Dominica and Trinidad remain Catholic as their original rulers left them. In Grenada, St. Lucia and Trinidad the popular dialect is a patcis intelligible to Haitians or Martiniquans but quite beyond the Antiguan or Jamaican. Shango is prevalent in some units, absent from others. The same staples, such as breadfruit, are cooked differently in different areas. In a sense, the large East Indian populations which differentiate British Guiana and Trinidad from other British Caribbean units are also historical accidents. Perhaps the specially dense population of Barbados is another.

Being learned, culture is derivative as well as transmissible; being transmitted, it is liable to change, even if this is selective rather than random. Being transmissible, it is not bound to a particular society, although intimately involved in social life. Being an abstraction from behaviour, it has an elastic reference according to problem and interest. Thus we may speak of West Indian or Trinidadian culture with equal relevance; the greater does not preclude the less, but rather assumes it. Moreover, although a system of patterns, cultures are in process of change. Contemporary West Indian culture certainly differs from its future as well as its past condition. Its derivation from an earlier phase directs our attention to the history and composition of these societies. The intimate relations between culture as a way of life and society as the people who live that way indicate that West Indian culture at any moment is the sum of patterns, behaviours, ideas and habits characteristic of West Indian societies.

I have already shown that the West Indies Federation in its present form does not correspond with the West Indian area whose common culture is my concern. This illustrates the distinctions between nationalism, political union and cultural community. Despite the cultural continuities across imperial frontiers, I have also excluded the French, Dutch, American and Latin units from my field of interest. Political differences underlie and express the differences of language, history, economic and social orientation which characterise the Caribbean dependencies of different metropolitan Powers. Despite the best will in the world, these factors take precedence over regional co-existence and co-operation. British Guiana and Honduras were both invited to join the West Indian Federation; not so Martinique, Surinam or Puerto Rico. If we are to answer that thorny question, "Who" (or sometimes "What" is a West Indian?", without setting any political restriction on the reply it may well be "Anyone born in the West Indies or adopting it as his home". Beyond this point we run into differences of citizenship and cultural model.

Properly speaking, we should distinguish here between British, Dutch, French and other West Indians. It is an unhappy feature of the West Indian Federation that its name suggests it includes all West Indians; no doubt this is an effect of nationalism. By limiting the definition above to British West Indians, I include everyone native to this group of territories who has not transferred allegiance, as by naturalisation in the United States or by permanent emigration. I also include all immigrants who have adopted these territories as their home, whether formally or informally, provided they have developed local loyalties and attachments which take precedence over others elsewhere. These immigrants are subject to no racial restriction. In itself, this is a notable fact. But my definition excludes those immigrants whose primary loyalties to their homelands and native cultures undergo no major change. Such people may be described as expatriates; and within the British West Indies itself there is a sense in which Jamaicans in Trinidad or Barbadians in Jamaica may be expatriates; but this is sub-cultural. Once we have abstracted the distinctive West Indian pattern from their behaviour, such intra-Caribbean migrants are distinguished mainly by on-group rather than cultural features.

The British Caribbean culture is one form of Creole culture; the French or Dutch West Indian cultures are other forms. Creoles are natives of the Caribbean; formerly, people born in Louisiana were Creoles also. Creole cultures vary a good deal, but all are sharply distinct from the Mestizo cultures of Spanish-Amerindian derivation which dominate Middle America. The Creole complex has its historical base in slavery, plantation systems and colonialism. Its cultural composition mirrors its racial mixture. European and African elements predominate in fairly standard combinations and relationships. The ideal forms of institutional life, such as government, religion, family and kinship, law, property, education, economy and language are of European derivation; in consequence, differing metropolitan affiliations produce differing versions of Creole culture. But in their Creole contexts, these institutional forms diverge from their metropolitan models in greater or less degree to fit local conditions. This local adaptation produces a Creole institutional complex which differs from the metropolitan model. Similar institutions function differently in Creole and metropolitan areas. In consequence, despite their shared traditions, Creoles and metropolitans differ culturally in orientations, values, habits and modes of activity. These differences alone would be quite

sufficient to distinguish the Creole culture from its metropolitan model. The immigrant who adopts West Indian culture as a way of life "creolizes" in doing so.

However, the Creole culture also contains many elements of African and slave derivation which are absent from metropolitan models. Perhaps this combination of European and African traditions is the most important feature of Creole life. As we know, slavery defined the initial circumstances of this cultural accommodation. European interests and institutions then predominated, but the functional problems of the slave society required adaptations which promoted a distinctive Creole version of the European parent culture. The African slaves made their own adaptations also, often in contraposition to those slaves born and reared as Creoles. Within this structural complex, the Creole society and culture emerged together, its white rulers having the highest status and their culture the greatest prestige. Things African were correspondingly devalued, including African racial traits. The basis of the "white bias" which characterises West Indian society is thus cultural rather than racial.

Miscegenation complicated the picture, producing hybrids, of whom some were free and predominantly European in culture, while others were slave, acculturated to the Creole "African" complex. Emancipation removed the legal basis for this extreme form of racial domination; it neither could nor did establish social and cultural homogeneity. The Creole ruling class adapted to the changing conditions as best they could; so did the ex-slaves. The Creole culture area remained defined by the formative situation of African plantation slavery. Within this New World context, Old World cultural forms assume new features and functions.

Professor and Mrs. Herskovits have shown the importance of African contributions to the Creole cultural complex.8 "African" elements are observable in language, diet, folklore, family and kinship, property, marketing, medicine, magic and religion, exchange-labour, economic organisations such as the susu9 or "partners".10 In music, dress, dancing and domestic life the African contribution is unmistakable. Only rarely however do we find African traits persisting in a pure form; more generally they are overlaid by Creole influences and situations, or they are associated with elements of European origin. Thus, Shango is identified with Christian saints, "African" syntax underlies Creole dialects, and the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses belong with herbal and animal medicines in the local obeah complex. The complex historical factors involved in this cultural accommodation are illustrated in the long debate about the derivation of Creole negro family forms. Some scholars argue that the "matrifocal" New World negro family is traceable to slavery; others admit the influence of slavery on its formation, but point to West African structural parallels. While I recognise the importance of both these historical influences, it seems clear that if we are to understand the persistence of these mating and kinship forms, we have to study them in their present context to determine their structural variability and functional correlates. 11 One reasonable hypothesis is that the structure of Creole society and culture is still sufficiently similar to that of our slave period for many old customs to retain functional value.

Without explicit recognition of this fundamental negro-white combination within the Creole complex, it is difficult either to specify the distinctive features of West Indian life and culture, or to understand how other ethnic groups and traditions fit into it. This negro-white complex which has been formative for the West Indies diverges sharply in its racial and cultural components. In this area Negroes outnumber Whites markedly, and have done so for centuries; but European institutions and cultural models predominate. The Creole configuration which reflects the particulars of this association in especially unique because of this balance and its historical depth. The West Indian-bred White is not culturally European, nor is the West Indian-bred black culturally African. Naturally, in view of its predominance, the European component in Creole culture has undergone less obvious modification than its African counterpart; but that it has been modified, there can be no doubt.

By 1838 the basic framework of West Indian society and culture was fully established. In Jamaica some Jewish elements had been partially assimilated to the British. After Emancipation, planters short of labour sought to import supplies. The greater their scope for economic expansion and their sense of labour shortage, the greater was their demand. Germans, Portuguese, Britons, Chinese and Indians were imported. A certain number of African slaves liberated by the Royal Navy were also brought in at this time. The greatest scope for plantation operations then lay in Trinidad and British Guiana, and there the immigration was heavy and continuous. A few Indians came to Grenada but no Chinese, Barbados and Carriacou, already overpopulated, exported surplus workers instead of importing them. The economic depression in Jamaica discouraged immigration there, and the few Indians, Chinese or Europeans brought in as workers presented no major problems. Naturally the immigrants sought to withdraw from their onerous situation as best they could. In Jamaica the Chinese rapidly acquired control of the grocery trade; the East Indians, although more numerous, have been less successful; the white immigrant labourers withdrew into rural enclaves, closed endogamous units, or, if Portuguese, into commercial urban activities. In Trinidad and British Guiana, where Indian immigration continued for decades on a substantial scale, the immigrants were concentrated on plantations in conditions which ensured social and ethnic isolation.

The cultural framework of Creole society governed its accommodation of these immigrant groups. The Creole cultural and social organisation was a graduated hierarchy of European and African elements, crudely visualised in a White-Black colour scale. To participate adequately in this system, immigrants had to learn the elements of Creole life. The degree to which they adopted European cultural forms set the upper limits of their place in the social hierarchy. On their arrival, the indentured workers were therefore marginal to Creole society in much the same way as the Dominican Caribs, Honduran Maya and Guianese Amerindians are marginal today. Being marginal, the immigrants were free to abstain from Creole activities or to take part in them. If participating, they were also theoretically free to enter the Creole hierarchy at points of their own choice, providing only that they manipulated the requisite cultural skills and had the necessary economic backing. Being neither white nor black

both the Indians and the Chinese escaped placement in the Creole colour scale which crudely equated race and culture. This position itself indicates their marginal status in the Creole society not so long ago. Being white, the European indentured labourers found themselves in an especially difficult situation, equated with Negro peasants economically and socially, but with the white planter class in race and culture. It is therefore quite understandable that they withdrew from this contradictory structural context into the closed communities in which they presently live. The variable degrees of acculturation and assimilation among Chinese and Indian immigrants illustrates their opportunities and attendant problems. The Jamaican Chinese exhibit different patterns of assimilation from those in British Guiana. 12 For the large Indian populations of British Guiana and Trinidad, the prospect of creolisation-that is, the adoption of Creole culture and assimilation to Creole society-still presents a number of problems, including the probable loss of their Indian heritage and group solidarity. In British Guiana the Indian population occupies an especially difficult position; although the largest racial group, it has no clear alternative to becoming Creole. Under slavery the African majority were in a somewhat similar situation. The current racial tensions of Guiana or Trinidad may thus express changes presently under way as the Indians resolve the problems presented by creolization, while the creoles resolve the problems of accommodating these Indian groups.

It is only with multiracial Creole complex that West Indians can identify as West Indians. Whatever their racial affiliation, self-declared West Indians implicitly refer to this amalgam in which the basic racial and cultural elements are white and negro, and society is the mode of their association in which important elements from other traditions are selectively accommodated. The Lebanese colony in Jamaica merely demonstrates this analysis; arriving late, they rapidly won a major share of the trade in consumer goods. A generation ago, this group was distinguished from others as "Syrian"; today they are simply "Jamaican", assimilated to the urban upper class while remaining mainly endogamous. As indicated above, the Jamaican Jews went through a similar process long ago.

If my argument is correct, the characteristic West Indian complex combines two basic traditions, each of which is quite distinct and may persist more or less separately within the population. This is another way of saying that acculturation to the dominant Creole-European tradition varies widely among Creoles as well as immigrant groups. The problems presented by this cultural diversity are of special importance to student and nationalist alike, especially because the subordinate cultural tradition is that of the majority of the population, whose social status and life chances differ radically from the minority acculturated to Creole "Europeanism". For the student, the demographic disbalance coupled with this cultural division presents important problems and conditions. For the nationalist, who is usually a member of the numerical minority, the problems are immediate and compelling.

People who are uncertain of their cultural or national status are unlikely to be clear about "national" cultural goals; to many West Indians of low status and predominantly "African" Creole culture, nationalism may have the initial appeal of promising full citizenship; if it does not deliver this, it will cease to retain their support and may be cynically regarded as of benefit primarily to the middle class. Granted the social and cultural cleavages which are characteristic of Creole society, and the numerous factors which continuously reinforce them, "national" unity may be scarce, even within the negrowhite population, much less between this group and later immigrants. If this is so within separate territories, difficulties at the regional level can be expected. The common culture, without which West Indian nationalism cannot develop the dynamic to create a West Indian nation, may by its very nature and composition preclude the nationalism which invokes it. This is merely another way of saying that the Creole culture which West Indians share is the basis of their division. Hence present interest in the questions, "Is there a West Indian culture? What is it?".

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West Indian Poetry

R. J. OWENS

Reading through the two main anthologies of West Indian Poetry¹— is a dispiriting experience. So many poems and yet so little poetry; so many voices and yet almost no one with his own voice; under the seeming heterogeneity, a monotonous sameness.

In part this springs from a widely held view of the nature of poetry. A poem, one imagines, is an elevating thought, or an aspiration, or a pretty landscape, or a confession, clothed—decked out one might often say—in high-flown language. The essential banality of the thought or aspiration, the predictability of the response to the landscape, the conventionality of the confessing mind don't seem to matter providing only that the words are eye-or ear-catching enough. The result is that in place of an experience communicated in terms of its integration with the resources of language, we too often get more description of experiences, verbal gestures substituting for the real thing, and fake rather than genuine poetry.

A second limitation may be suggested by a disturbing awareness one has of the self-consciousness of so much of the verse. It is as if the poet were all the time aware of himself being a poet, with one eye on his performance, one eye on his audience's reaction, and none to spare for whatever it is he is trying to express. Allied to this is the literariness of some of the verses—mainly of the older generation of poets. As though having read and responded to other men's poetry, they want to show they can do the same thing. Too often they want to write a poem rather than having a poem to write. This leads them to an attempt to react to their own experience in terms of someone else's sensibility (as characterised by a personal movement or rhythm) or to a sterile preoccupation with poetic forms.

Thus Mr. J. E. Clare McFarlane's fondness for the English Romantic poets overpowers his individual sensibility to the extent that his verse is sometimes Shelleyan language married to Wordsworthian movement:

And I have sought,
Uneasy with thy hidden pain, the woods
On summer nights, to listen to the leaves
Whispering in solemn conclave, or to scan
Their black and golden tracery, images
And symbols of thine own mysterious fate,
Dark with forebodings, golden with lure
And promise of thy matchless loveliness;
And baffled, I have lifted searching eyes
Unto thy mist-veiled mountains, where the peace
And majesty of heaven linger yet.

(My Country)

¹Anthology of West Indian Poetry (ed. A. J. Seymour) Kykoveral No. 22, 1957 Anthology of West Indian Poetry, Caribbean Quarterly Vol. V. 3 1958.

where the reader is irresistibly reminded of the movement of Tintern Abbey

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing often times
The still, sad music of humanity,
Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; . . . etc.

Or in Mr. Virtue's The Web where the underlying reminiscence is Wordsworth's Daffodils.

Parting my window to the light
That flooded up an April dawn,
O, I beheld a vision bright
Upon a bough, across a lawn—
A spider's jewelled filigree
Suspended 'twixt the sward and sky
All perfect in its symmetry
To catch, to hold my raptured eye.

The essential flatness and staleness of these lines comes out in the betrayingly insensitive use of the language: 'A vision bright', 'O, I beheld; 'twixt the sward'. And it is not surprising that Mr. Virtue should have written a rather tired ninetyish villanelle in Wildean language with biblical overtones. The trouble with this and with Mr. W. Adolphe Roberts' exercises in the same form, is that they never rise above being exercises. The form displays a self-conscious interest in technique as an end in itself, and the poems remain sterile from the lack of any emerging emotional experience.

One does not single out these poets invidiously. On the contrary derivativeness, even pastiche, is common enough to be characteristic of many. In Mr. Collymore one is aware of the Georgians; in Mr. R. L. C. McFarlane of Yeats, Tennyson and Fitzgerald, though he can write that 'The conventional poetic is my enemy' and dismiss Tennyson as 'Mere grandeur, all his quarry in a phrase'; in Mr. E. M. Roach of Hopkins;

Praise out of her heart her whole and hybrid beauty Now that her bone stands up among upstanding Beauty of boughs blossoming flames and flames Leaping and falling in fields, on hearths, in hearts Tender and kind in their first uttering love; Praise her great rose among the season's roses (*Poem*)

in Mr. Errol Hill of D. H. Lawrence, and in Mr. Walcott of almost everyone. Colonialism may be a dead force politically, but it is very much alive culturally. This would not matter particularly, if the local poet, while feeling an affinity with some English poet, later developed away from his reminiscent manner and found his own voice. But it would seem that some of them simply have no further idea of poetry than to produce jackdaw collections from other poets mixed in with a general Golden Treasury verse norm.

A great many of the poems written in the West Indies are descriptive. Here again, despite some modest and pleasing successes, the reader is usually offered a catalogue of a priori 'poetic' elements—flowers, clouds, the various aspects of the sea—in place of any emotional fusing of the disparate elements into a poem. Mr. Collymore's This Land with its echoes of John o'Gaunt's speech may be taken as typical:

This land of pastel tints and compromise, Of huddled tenantries and garden villages Of rumshops and churches, slums and postcard views This land where sugarcane impersonating wheat Deceives the traveller's eye; . . .

The best account of this sort of verse is Mr. Collymore's own '. . . . ill digested impressions,

Mind waste, the fermentation

Of the commonplace . . . '

Quite clearly the events of 1938 and after have led many poets to use verse to declare their consciousness of a 'spirit of place' and their community with it. Sometimes it is a rhapsodic sense, sometimes, as in M. G. Smith's and Wilson Harris' an apocalyptic sense, sometimes as in H. M. Telemaque's In Our Land a 'bitter-sweet' sense.

But all too frequently the emotional response is over-insistent and lacks corresponding substance in the verse. In poem after poem the poet's emotion generated rhetoric at the expense of any core of refining actuality, and feeling drowns thought.

When they come to the themes of racial discrimination or economic and political exploitation, the poetic value is lowest of all. One does not doubt for a moment the sincerity and bitterness of the feelings provoked, but the verse produced is either hectoring, sermonising, or sentimental (see R. L. C. McFarlane's sonnet sequence Freedom). A poet's job is to communicate his lived experience with the maximum fullness and complexity, and not merely to assert rhetorically. The justice or injustice of the events provoking the poet's emotion is altogether beside the point in poetry. What is essentially the point is the width and depth with which he explores the experiences he lives through, an exploration which must clearly be concerned with the expressive qualities of language and its creative relation to the total truth of the experience. The problem of language is crucial and I shall return to it later. Meanwhile it may be hinted at by a consideration of this verse from Mr. R. L. C. McFarlane's Vigil.

I waited out the days—Youth to youth in flower Came passionate aflame Upon the burning hour To taste the brimming dew: I too had my store.

Here the idea of youthful love and passion is associated with heat ('aflame' burning'). Youth is the time for love and this naturally suggests the association of 'flower'. The 'brimming dew' which is tasted recalls vaguely the

nectar sucked by the bee, and goes loosely with the idea of young lovers giving and taking from each other something delicious. However, instead of the idea being apprehended and clarified by the image, made actual in terms of words, the poet's grasp is slack and he permits his realisation of the idea to be confused, relying instead on its poetic conventionality to remind us of what he means rather than to make us feel it freshly). Flowers don't taste each other's dew, nor would one expect to find flowers brimming 'at the burning hour 'when dew has presumably evaporated. The desired fusion is replaced by confusion. The false rhyme 'store' is another indication of the poet abandoning the effort to control his experience (either the rhyme matters or it doesn't, in which case either use a rhyme or don't bother at all) and surrendering to rhapsodic statement.

It seems more important at the present time that the streets should fall on the general criticisms already stated than on the occasional successes. Indeed, the absence of any detailed criticism is one of the great lacks on the West Indian literary scene. To suggest this is not to argue that good poetry will only be produced when the critical winds blow strongly. Criticism alone cannot help the poetry to get written, though it may help the ordinary reader to a greater awareness of what is good or bad in the poetry produced. If the readers of West Indian verse come first to expect and then to demand better quality, it may be more difficult than it is at present for much of the current pseudo-poetry to find its way into print.

A glance through these anthologies and one or two collections of individual poets, suggests that the heterogeneity of styles adopted derives from an underlying uncertainty. They remind one of a lady in a milliner's trying on hat after hat and unable to decide which best suits her personality. Here, too, honest criticism can help the poet to find his own voice by exposing the inner emptiness bedevilling much of the present rag-bag electicism of style. It is difficult to do this on the basis of the few undated poems allotted to each of the poets represented in the anthologies. Poems written years ago appear with more up-to-date work, and one is at a loss to decide in which direction an author's work is developing. It is paradoxical that while not hard to get individual poems into print, it is very difficult to find a publisher for collections, though one admits the economic difficulties. It would help if, say, the literary section of the Sunday papers would occasionally print a selection from poets rather than the customary single weekly poem. Or perhaps they might even manage a literary supplement? One way or another we need some bulk to know a poet's capacity.

Mr. Collymore's Collected Poems confirm amply one's suspicion that his best work is in the Georgian Romantic vein. He has nothing very startling or original to say, but can please at his own unambitious level. His verse reflects a man of sensitive and decent feelings, puzzled by the immanent human problems and supported by simple faith. This Land and Lullaby indicate the nature of his capacity. When he tries irony he becomes heavy handed and awkward, and his Dream Fabric, while revealing in a biographical sense, is poetically little more than a prose discussion chopped up into blank verse.

For Mr. R. L. C. McFarlane, whose Hunting the Bright Stream collects together his verses of the last six years, poetry is a mode of escape from his

problems. Yeats, whom Mr. McFarlane admires, says somewhere that poetry is not made from the poet's struggles with his environment but from his struggles with himself, and Mr. McFarlane's verses, which deal with both forms of struggle, prove the truth of the assertion in his own case. His imagery tends frequently to be ornamental and slackly realised, and he is not above pilfering a good line from Hopkins (see Mockbirds Song). His attempt to make poetry out of his revulsion of the artificiality of society is seldom more than marginally successful (see Another Twelvemonth Comes, Fleeing the Bourgeois World) though the Yeats-cum-Shellev intensity of his sonnets (see The Flame, The Spur and The Entangling Coil, The Strangling Rope) arouse sympathy. At present his art is not equal feelings, and 'the man that suffers' is too dominant over 'the mind which creates'. But he has a certain poetic sensibility for all that. One respects his pursuit of an ideal of human integrityunfortunately equated with 'Soul'-in a world which his imagery suggests appears to him as a battlefield, as one respects his humanistic desire to come into some meaningful contact with his fellowmen beyond simply 'knowing' them. He is at his best in those poems where the taut movement of the verse assists the laconic statements to a maximum effect, though even here the poems remain potential rather than achieved. (See Choice of Gold and Epitaph for a Poet.) His weakness is an overriding emotionality which strikes a false note and impedes the full acquiescence of the reader. "The mark of the 'genuine man', Arnold said, 'becomes the mark of the poetry and we note a quality of diction and movement, a note, an accent—the self utterance." To produce this needs mastery of words over feelings, needs poetic craft, precision and honesty, all of which Mr. McFarlane still lacks despite the development in his work from the period of the three earlier poems he also prints.

Of the other poets in the anthologies there is space only for a few comments. Mr. Raymond Barrow's Low in the Wind manages to include such outmoded phrases as 'I needs must' and 'I fain would' in the same verse. His Triptych, however, is a modest success. Mr. Martin Carter and Mr. A. N. Forde illustrate the rhapsodic and the descriptive modes mentioned earlier. Both confuse rhetoric with poetry. One hears much praise of Mr. Wilson Harris' work, but the poems here make the fatal error of resorting to a private symbolism which baffled communication with one reader despite several attempts. He should perhaps reflect on Blake's later verse and do otherwise. Incoherence also spoils Mr. E. McG. Keane's Fragments and Patterns, which deals with another persistent Caribbean theme, the nature of the identity of a West Indian. One carries away a sense of puzzled vagueness arising from words whose uncontrolled suggestibility is beyond the poet's apprehension. Nothing is realised and the poem is incoherent at the core. Mr. E. M. Roach indulges himself in a breathless rhetorical rodomontade in I am the Archipelago. The highflown tone and disarticulated movement turn the poem into a watered down version of minor Elizabethan blank verse:

> Let my black spinster sisters tend the church, Earn meagre wages, mate illegally Breed secret bastards, murder them in womb; Their fate is written in unwritten law.

The vogue of colour hardened into custom In the tradition of the slave plantation.

While in the Hopkins poem, quoted from earlier, he can be so 'literary' as to write the line,

And sing like light dawn's silver villanelle

without caring that the Tennysonian mellifluousness is wrecked by the tongue-waggling alliteration of 'like light'. Mr. Roach is clearly an intelligent man and one hopes he will stop attitudinizing and get down to refining the sensibility he shows in his Seven Splendid Cedars. Mr. A. J. Seymour's narrative poem on Columbus in rather wobbly terza rima is successful on the whole. The chief objection is that there is no real pressure of anything to say behind it. It is pleasant, and quite accomplished, but essentially trivial.

With Mr. Sherlock one welcomes an attempt to relate the language of the poem to Jamaican speech modes. Nevertheless Pocomania seems largely an exercise in verbal rhythmics of the sort Edith Sitwell used to write, though its breathless incantatory rhythms work up successfully the appropriate subfrenzied effect. Unfortunately Mr. Sherlock tends to dilute his thought so much that the kick in it is negligible and one swallows a good many verses before the effect is felt. This is particularly so in Ascension where 'the red flowers'-'red blood' equation is conventional and achieved rather diffusely. His rhythm in A Beauty too of Twisted Trees is over-insistently thumping, and in Goodbye for Daley is apt to lapse into 'Hiawathics'. His verse betrays a romantically rhetorical strain and a tendency to be too easily satisfied with readily achieved effects at the expense of a more distilled and meditated formulation. Mr. M. G. Smith, on the other hand, though not lacking in intensity, raises doubts about the nature of a barely controlled current of sentimentality, of worked up-as opposed to worked on-feeling, and leaves one feeling that his Madonna and Son is a little 'tour-de-forced'. His preference for abstract nouns and the vaguely transcendental in Testament and Jamaica, tends to divert effective statement or sharp observation into rhetorical exhortation once again. For this reason Mr. Telemaque, and in particular Mr. H. A. Vaughan, impress one more by being simpler and less pretentious. Mr. Vaughan's Revelation and Dark Voices have something of a Frost-like conciseness and sureness which set him apart from the general run.

But of all the poets represented, it is Mr. Walcott whom one finds the most interesting. He has, one would venture, the greatest potential gifts—and this despite the fact that he shares the faults of all the others. Yet it is he who seems original when the others are conventional. At present he still lacks an integrating grasp on his material, a lack deriving—the poetry itself is the warrant for the suggestion—from some deeper personal frustration. In the face of his experience his artistic response is often uncertain and ambivalent. One has a sense that this experience is as yet intractable, unresolved, and that to it is due that unconvincingly insistent element in his poetry, an attitude willed rather than felt, an 'ought to feel' rather than 'do feel'. (See The Yellow Cemetery.

There is much too, that is pseudo, imprecise, overstressed and maudlin, and his work is peppered with stray lines from others blown about by a variety

of passing influences and, at times—Henri Christophe is an example—little more than pastiche. Yet an occasional image, a few lines, a cadence here and there suggest him to be the candidate most likely to produce poetry which will be read outside the Caribbean.

III

Both the books discussed above claim to be anthologies of West Indian Poetry. Exactly what this is is far from clear. Is West Indian poetry, for example, poetry written by West Indians? Or is it poetry which has for its content events and scenes limited to the Caribbean Islands? Or is it the verse product of a sensibility formed in particular surroundings? None of these, clearly, is a satisfactory definition. West Indian poetry, like any other poetry, is a matter in the first instance of language. The answer to the question 'What does it mean to be a West Indian in the world today' will rightly be sought in West Indian literature, for its literature is a people's primary agent of discovery and self-analysis. And the texture of a people's literature—as of their lives—is directly related to a people's language. In Ezra Pound's phrase 'Words which bear the taste of men's mouths' are the foundation of literature. The mention of an American poet reminds us that the United States, too, had to create its own literature from a local variant of English English.

American writers and critics are well aware of this. Mr. John Dos Passos begins his trilogy U.S.A. with these words:

"U.S.A. is the slice of a continent. U.S.A. is a group of holding companies; some aggregations of trade unions, a set of laws bound in calf, a radio network, a chain of moving picture theatres, a column of stock quotations 'rubbed out' and written in by a Western Union boy on a blackboard, a public library full of old newspapers and dogeared history books with protests scrawled on the margins in pencil. U.S.A. is the world's greatest river-valley fringed with mountains and hills, U.S.A. is a set of big-mouthed officials with too many bank accounts. U.S.A. is a lot of men buried in their uniforms in Arlington Cemetery. U.S.A. is the letters at the end of an address when you are away from home. But mostly U.S.A. is the speech of the people."

and Lionel Trilling has this to say in his essay on Huckleberry Finn:

"In the matter of language, American literature had a special problem. The young nation was inclined to think that the mark of the truly literary product was a grandiosity and elegance not to be found in the common speech. It therefore encouraged a greater breach between its vernacular and its literary language than, say, English literature of the same period. This accounts for the hollow ring one now and then hears even in the work of our best writers in the first half of the last century. English writers of equal stature would never have made the lapses into rhetorical excess that are common in Cooper and Poe and that are to be found even in Melville and Hawthorne."

Mutatis mutandis, this might have been said of West Indian literature, One finds the same attitude to 'dialect', viz., that it is useful only for humorous writing, and the same tendency to 'grandiosity and elegance' in the use of English.

The parallel is not complete, of course, because the West Indies has so far produced no Mark Twain. In *Huckleberry Finn* an art speech is created out of vernacular speech and, to quote Trilling again, 'it established for written prose the virtues of American colloquial speech.' He goes on to say that this had nothing to do with pronunciation or grammar. 'It has something to do with ease and freedom in the use of language. Most of all it has to do with the structure of the sentence, which is simple, direct, and fluent, maintaining the rhythm of the word groups of speech and the intonations of the speaking voice.' Attempts have been made, of course, to do the same in West Indian literature, though Mr. Reid's New Day employs a mode that falls between the two stools of art speech and vernacular and is neither successfully. At all events, and allowing for the differences that exist between the islands, it seems probable that until the West Indian equivalent of Mark Twain arises in the Caribbean, literature here will remain minor and bastard.

For the poet the problem is especially keen. He is concerned with all the aspects of the language, grammar and pronunciation as much as intonation and rhythm. If Mr. Elliot's remark that the poet gives his contemporaries 'words for their feelings' and thus 'teaches them something about themselves' is true, then his task demands an infinitely delicate response to his experience through the linguistic modes in which he commonly feels, and only by exploiting all the resources—rhythm, intonation, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.—of these modes can he hope to respond fully and freely.

This is the primary task and the rest is secondary. As yet there is no crystallised form of art speech and the multiplicity of vernaculars have so far defied resolution, whilst in Jamaica the dialect element in speech varies all along the social spectrum. On this question one feels it necessary to dissent from Mr. A. J. Seymour when in the introduction to his anthology (p. 11) he refers to the poets having

'Some unconscious desire to bridge the gap between themselves and the people for whom they are writing (so that) when he describes things he experiences, he uses the form of words likely to share that experience with others.'

Rather, one would say, West Indian verse is already given too much to 'describing experiences' instead of realising them through words, and the form of words chosen is not yet one 'likely to enable the poet to share his experiences with others.' This, indeed, is the heart of the problem, and West Indian poetry will not begin in any real sense until it is solved.

The French West Indian Background of "Négritude"

G. R. COULTHARD

The word "négritude" appeared for the first time in print in a long poem by the Martinican, Aimé Césaire "Cahiers d'un retour au pays natal" (Paris, 1939). Subsequently the word with its implications, has come into common use in the discussion of neo-African literature and art. It is to be seen frequently in the pages of such literary reviews as *Présence Africaine* and *Black Orpheus*. The concept of "négritude" has also been analysed at considerable length by such writers as J. P. Sartre, in his "Orphée noir" (1) and more recently by Jahnheinz Jahn in "Muntu" (2).

Césaire's poem not only contains the first use of the word, but it supplies a brief picture of the various stages of the development of the concept. For this reason, it may be worthwhile, at this stage, to give a brief summary of the poem.

The poem starts with a blisteringly bitter evocation of the poverty, decay and hopelessness of colonial Martinique—a tremendous, inspired wave of disgust envelopes everything. This passes into an expression of hate for the white world, symbolized in the "white" death of Toussaint Louverture in his prison in the snow-bound Jura, and develops itself into an attack on reason. In his revolt against reason, Césaire turns to primitivism, magic, iconoclasm (from a European point of view):—

Because we hate you, you and your reason, and we turn to the precocious dementia of flaming madness of persistant cannibalism (50-51) (3).

This wallowing in hatred, unreason, rejection of European values, in self-humiliation, however, is resolved into something positive. Through his suffering and abasement, the Negro (Césaire speaks for all negroes) has learned something. In his apparent negativeness, again from a European point of view, he possesses something of great value which the over-mechanised European has forgotten or lost:

Hurrah for those who have never invented anything,

for those who have never explored anything

for those who have never tamed anything.

but they give themselves up, entranced, to the essence of everything

⁽¹⁾ Sartre, J. P., Introduction to Léopold Sédar Senghor's "La nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache", Paris 1948.

^(*) Jahn, Jahnheinz, Muntu—An outline of neo-African culture London 1961.— First published in German, 1958.

^(*) Césaire, Aimé, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Préface d'André Breton, Paris 1947. P. 50-51. First published in the review Volonté, Paris, 1939.

ignorant of surfaces but gripped by the movement of all things, careless of conquering, but playing the game of the world truly the elder sons of the world porous to all the breaths of the world . . .(4)

and it is precisely this mystical oneness with the world which the "White world" has lost:

Listen to the white world horribly weary with its immense effort, its rebellious joints straining under the hard stars its blue steel stiffness piercing the mystic flesh pity for our conquerors, omniscient and naive.(5)

With this knowledge, the tone of the poem changes, for this awareness of his value, and his values, has permitted him to shake off the old shame-faced "négritude". There is pride and an immense hope, for the work of man is not finished, but has only just begun, and the Negro is on his feet and free, ready to make his own contribution in his own terms. It should be emphasized that this newly found freedom is a result of the discovery of the negro modality, of "négritude". And this is brought out quite clearly in the poem. Apart from the quotations already given, which point clearly enough the direction of the poet's thought, he states his position quite unequivocally in the following passage:

my négritude is not a stone, thrown up against the clamour of the day, my négritude is not a pool of dead water on the dead eye of the earth my négritude is not a tower or a cathedral it delves into the rod flesh of the soil it plunges into the burning flesh of the sky (6).

It is a sort of telluric mysticism which the Negro has discovered as a result of being rejected by the white world as an inferior, who at best, can learn the ways of white civilization.

In a brilliant analysis of the position of the Negro vis-à-vis white civilization, "Peau noire, masques blancs", a compatriot of Césaire, Franz Fanon, makes the same point, perhaps with less dramatic force, but with greater clarity:

"The scientists have admitted that the negro is a human creature: physically and mentally he has developed analogously to the white man: the same morphology, the same histology. On all fronts reason has secured our victory. But this very victory was making a fool of me. In theory it was

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid. 78.

⁽⁶⁾ Ibid. 79.

^(*) Ibid. 78.

agreed: the Negro is a human being. But what good was that to me? Too late. Between them and me stood a world—the white world. For they were not capable of wiping out the past."(7).

"I had rationalized my environment, but it had rejected me in the name of colour prejudice. Since there was no understanding on the basis of reason, I threw myself into the arms of the irrational. I become irrational up to my neck. The tom-tom drummed out my cosmic mission. The arteries of the world, torn open, made me fertile, I found, not my origin, but the origin. The white man has never understood this magical substitution. He desires the world and wants it for himself alone. He considers himself predestined to rule the world. He has made it useful to himself. But there are values which do not submit to his rule. Like a sorcerer I steal from the white man a certain world which he cannot identify." (8). And to complete the similarity with Césaire's poetized account of négritude, he observes: "As an American friend of mine said to me I had become in the mechanized world of the white man, the guardian of humanity." (9). The context then, quite clearly, consists of a revolt against the position of inferiority assigned to the Negro, against his economic exploitation: a criticism and rejection of "white" values and the propounding of an attitude to life, a way of apprehending reality which are quite different (the difference is constantly stressed) and specifically "Negro", belonging to Negroes the world over. The approach through négritude is felt to be somehow richer, more natural, and there is the suggestion that "white" civilization has gone wrong, has taken from a human point of view a wrong turning into excessive materialism, pragmatism and technomania.

In art and literature, as would be expected, "négritude" involves a radically new approach. Art does not operate through reason, logic, but through magic, through fascination. It is a possession and recreation of the world through the magic power of the word. Some critics were deceived into thinking that the products of "négritude" were surrealist, and indeed, it was André Breton, the high priest of surrealism who took up Césaire, and to some extent launched him. However, in spite of superficial resemblances, at closer inspection it is quite clear that "négritude" is different from surrealism. Puzzled by the true nature of "négritude", J. P. Sartre in his "Orphée Noir" (10) where he deals with the subject at a metaphysical level, is forced into the paradox of describing Négritude as a "committed, even directed, automatic writing". And vet, this is perhaps the best way of accounting for the practices of négritude writers, for while there is a deliberate subject, theme or purpose, the artist abandons himself to it with complete creative freedom. Indeed, this is the very essence of négritude in art. As Césaire puts it in his "Les armes miraculeuses": Out of the sky, the birds, the parrots, the bells, silk cloth and drums, out of a touch of drunkness and wild endearments, out of copper clanging and

⁽¹⁾ Fanon, Jules, Peau noire masques blancs Paris, 1952. p. 122.

^(°) Ibid. p. 125.

^(°) Ibid. p. 131.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Sartre in Senghor, page 27.

mother-of-pearl, out of Sundays, dancing, children's words, and love words, out of love for the little fists of children, I will build a world, my world with round shoulders(11).

It should be pointed out here however, that the aesthetic aspect of négritude as a sort of directed surrealism is found, at least in French West Indian writers, almost exclusively in Césaire, and, as we shall see later, it is the programmatic features of négritude which predominate. This does not mean to say that what Césaire and Fanon claim for négritude does not apply to some African, both in French and English, expressions of the Negro way of art.(12).

So "négritude" appears today as a formulation of a Negro attitude to life and to art. It has been analysed and interpreted as a philosophy by Sartre and in terms of a traditional African (Bantu) values, as Nonno, by Jahnheinz Jahn(13), Nonno being the magic procreative power of the word. And yet, although since 1945, "négritude" has been given a pan-Negro and fundamentally African context, largely as the result of the collaboration and mixing of African and French West Indian writers in French intellectual circles, it still retains, at least historically, a West Indian connection and although it is possible to see in the poem of Césaire a synthesis of historical négritude, at least in its main features, it may be useful to look at the various and gradual stages, through which négritude passed before becoming susceptible to a clear and definite formulation, much as we have seen in Césaire and Fanon.

From its very first beginnings, négritude has moved in a French atmosphere, and it is to the ex-French colony of Haiti that one must look to find its roots. Perhaps the first stirrings do not appear to bear much resemblance to the fully fledged formulation we have seen in Césaire and Fanon, but in Haiti is to be found the first awareness, the first prise de conscience, of the Negro in a white world, and it is the unbroken continuity of the theme in Haitian literature that forces the conclusion that to a very large extent, historically, the concept of négritude grew out of the Haitian situation.

After Haiti became independent in 1804, the French cultural link was not broken. Indeed, to Haitian thinkers of the XIX century, culture, civilization were essentially French: French culture, French civilization and while the subjects of their writing remained Haitian to a large extent (the struggle for freedom against a background of slavery, the epic fight for independence, the great figures of the period of independence—Christophe, Dessalines, Toussaint Louverture, Haitian landscape), the literary ideals of the Haitian intelligentsia were French. French political dominion may have been repudiated, French literary fashions were certainly not. In the midst of this cultural francophilia, the idea that independent "black" Haiti had the

⁽¹¹⁾ Césaire, A., Les armes miraculeuses, Paris 1946. p. 126.

⁽¹²⁾ See for example. Tutuola, Amos, The Palm-Wine drunkard London 1952 Sédar-Senghor, (1)—Chants d'ombre Paris 1945; Mphahlele, Ezekiel, Down Second Avenue, London 1959 &c.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Jahn, op. cit.

historical mission of demonstrating to the world the capacity of a "civilization" (à la française), of a coloured people of African descent, was not slow in making its appearance. While much was published along these lines between 1850 and and 1900, two works stand out as clear formations of this trend: Anténor Firmin's De l'égalité des races humaines (Paris, 1885) and Hannibal Price's, De la réhabilitation de la race noire par le peuple d'Haiti (Paris, 1900).

In De l'égalité des races humaines, Firmin points to the achievements of ancient Egyptian civilization, quotes travellers on the beauty and organization of Sudanese cities, to refute the idea of the Negro's cultural incapacity. Haiti, he thinks, has a special role: "to show the whole world that all men, black or white, are equal in qualities as they are equal in rights" (14). He also considers that Haiti should serve as an example for the "rehabilitation of Africa" (15).

Taking up the theme of the rehabilitation of the black race by the Haitian people, Hannibal Price stresses even more strongly the part played by Haiti in restoring the dignity of the Negro in the world. The following quotation states this view very forcibly:

"I am a man of Haiti, the Mecca, the Judea of the black race, the country where are to be found the sacred fields of Vertières, la Crête à Pierrot, la Ravine aux Couleuvres, le Tombeau des Indigènes, (scenes of battles in the Haitian war of independence), and a hundred others where every man with African blood in his veins should go, on a pilgrimage, at least once in his life, for it was there that the negro became a man: it was there, that, breaking his chains, he condemned slavery in the New World forever".(16).

It is apparent, however, in his discussion of vaudou practices of African origin, that he rejects these as signs of backwardness, leading foreigners to scorn Haiti for its primitiveness. The people of Haiti, he affirms, is profoundly attached to Christianity.

The book also contains a spirited attack on racial prejudice, very suggestive, in tone and general direction, of subsequent onslaughts on colonialism. "Racial prejudice," he writes, "ceases to be an error and becomes a crime when it is deliberately used to perpetuate inequality by falsifying institutions and customs. The formula is: the conquered are inferior, therefore they must remain inferior".(17). And again: "Colour prejudice is the work of the white man. Whatever form it assumes, whatever its gradations may be, it is the work of the white man, coldly calculated, deliberately applied, by the white man for his profit and exclusive benefit."(18).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Firmin, Anténor, De l'égalité des races humaines Paris 1886. p. 16.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibid. p. 13.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Price, Hannibal, De la réhabilitation de la race noire par le peuple d'Haiti, Port-au-Prince 1900. p. 12.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Ibid. p. 101.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibid. p. 640.

There is no doubt that the tone and import of these two books are very close to the expression of négritude in such contemporary writers as Aimé Césaire, Jacques Roumain, Paul Niger, Franz Fanon and others. It is true that both authors are still trying to justify the Negro and his civilization in terms of European culture (the cultures of ancient Egypt, the Sudan are compared favourably with those of Greece and Rome; charges of primitivism, because of vaudou, are rejected), but the insistence of the place of the Negro in the world, as a cultural equal, the denunciation of colour prejudice as a cunning trick to perpetuate inequalities, the revaluation of African cultures—all these features relate the work of Firmin and Price to the current of négritude.

Although in a lighter vein, the tendency of Haitian poets of the XIX century to praise the beauty of black women, can be seen as part of the same trend—the total reappraisal of the Negro. This feature also figures prominently in the négritude writers of the 1940's and 50's (Léon Damas, Lionel Attuly, Phillippe Toby Marcelin, Jacques Stéphen Aléxis) etc. "No race has the monopoly of beauty, intelligence or strength," writes Césaire in his Cahiers (19).

The next important milestone in the development of négritude in Haiti is Jean Price Mars's Ainsi parla l'oncle (Port-au-Prince 1928).

Between 1900 and 1928 however, important changes had taken place in the cultural atmosphere of Haiti. Faith in French ways of doing things had been shaken, partly as the result of the several years of political chaos leading to the American occupation in 1915. French institutions appeared to have failed in Haiti, French culture was felt to be excessively literary. It was suggested that British and American models might be better suited to Haitian conditions. The shock caused by the American occupation in 1915 awakened an intense national feeling, but it was not to its French heritage that the Haitian intellectuals turned, but rather to the traditions of the people, which, scorned and neglected for over a century, had retained many African features in its folk culture.

When J. Price Mars wrote, in 1928: "We have no chance of being ourselves, unless we repudiate no part of our ancestral heritage. And indeed this heritage for eight-tenths of us is a gift from Africa" (20) he was voicing the new trend, and thereby becoming the guide, the mâitre à penser of two successive generations of Haitian intellectuals. Price Mars urged his compatriots to look into their folklore—the stories, legends, proverbs, religious practices, music, dancing of the Haitian people, which had been ignored or scorned during the "French" nineteenth century. He recommends the study of African civilizations and of African elements in Haitian folklore, pointing out that the "mystique" of Africa is still very much alive in Haitian folklore, full of references to "Guinée". He lashes out savagely at the racial prejudices of the Haitian élite, its snobbish worship of everything French or foreign, its attempts at racial and cultural disassociation from the people.

⁽¹º) Césaire, A. Cahier p. 88.

⁽³⁰⁾ Price-Mars, Jean, Ainsi parla l'oncle, Port-au-Prince 1928. p. 210.

Some aspects of Price Mars's predication affect Haiti alone, but others reach out far beyond the Haitian scene. One of his more far-reaching ideas is the importance of Africa to this West Indian society, his encouragement of the study of the African heritage, the study of African civilizations for the light they can throw on Haitian civilization. Another idea perhaps more important in the context of négritude, is his assumption that the Haitian has something very rare and very specific to offer the world. "May it not be", he writes, "that we have something to offer to the world which is not something watered down or imitated? In the accelerated mechanisation of the world, when all is becoming a combination of speed and dryness, we shall be still, for the rest of the world one of the precious reservoirs of poetry, joy and love." (21).

Romantically, lyrically expressed, is this not a prefiguration of the very essence of négritude?

From this point onward, the drums start to beat in the literature of Haiti. Poets express their nostalgia for the lost "home", where they were happy, uncomplicated, where they were "themselves". They yearn for primitivism, to throw off the false refinements of civilization, "to drink blood out of human skulls". The peasant novel starts with Jacques Romain's Montagne ensorcelée (1931) and Jean-Baptiste Cinéas's Drame de la terre (1933), full of vaudou mysticism, and culminates in Jean Stephen Alexis's Les arbres musiciens (1957), where the earthy spirituality of vaudou is set up as a king of nature of philosophy. In Jacques Roumains the brotherhood in suffering and revolt of the Negroes of the world is ringingly proclaimed, and joined with the revolt of all the other damned ones—all these writers revel in being "primitive", iconoclastic, in being black, anti-Christian, anti-white, although some are careful to point out that they are not racialists except in the context of a "white civilization" which rejects them:

Make not of me that man of hate, for whom I have only hatred, although I set myself down in one single race, you know my tyrannical love you know that it is not out of hate for other races that I demand to dig for this single race, what I want is for universal hunger, for universal thirst.(22).

and Jacques Roumains in "Bois d'ébène" after a furious embittered rhapsody on the sufferings of the Negro, stops himself short with a "Pourtant", in capital letters:

And yet, I only want to belong to your race, workers and peasants of all countries(23)

The tone of impassioned vituperation against "white" civilization and its values is however very prevalent. Nothing escapes the denunciations. The Christian religion is treated as an opiate to keep the Negro in subjection and

⁽³¹⁾ *Ibid.* p. 210. (22) Césaire, *Cahier*.

⁽²³⁾ Roumain, Bois d'ébène, Port-au-Prince 1945. p. 6.

its hypocritical connivance with colonialism and imperialism are stressed.(24). White architecture, clothes, music, dancing, philosophy, art—all come under the axe. The reason for the violence of these attacks is obvious. It is a question of undermining the tremendous prestige of "white" culture, which had been presented, arrogantly or paternally, to the non-white world, as the only valid culture. This phase of vituperation appears as necessary in order to break the feeling of inferiority, of tutelage, of acceptance, but it is not an essential part of négritude, only a phase, perhaps inevitable. In Césaire's Cahiers the tone of bitterness disappears once the true meaning of négritude has been discovered, and is replaced by a tone of jubilation, for what most matters to the theoreticians and practitioners of négritude is the proclamation of a set of Negro values, cultural in the widest sense, and the universal acceptance of those values. In another Martinican writer, Gilbert Gratiant, négritude is proclaimed with serenity in terms similar to those used by Césaire:

The earth is full of trees, the sky of storms,
Water seeps from the warm soils where the animal sleeps,
And the Negro knows
from a long and intimate cousinage,
the language of the waters speaking to the stars,
The will of the wind and the orders of fire.
Thanks in the name of man,
for what you have given,
Your arms were full,
and bending your knee
slave or warrior,
You placed at the feet of the World
The fruits of fervour and the power of rhythm.(25).

In spite, however, of the ultimate aim of négritude: the acceptance of Negro values in terms of themselves, most of the West Indian négritude writers have not gone beyond the vituperative stage and continue to flagellate white civilization and throw themselves into an exaggerated primitiveness. Indeed, there seems to be little progression either in content or style between Phillippe Thoby Marcellin's poem "Sainement" (in the Haitian review La Trouée, 1st July, 1927), in which the writer "swears his scorn for European refinements" and ends up "naked, very much the descendant of slaves" intoning the requiem for rotting civilization, Léon Damas's hate-filled diatribes in "Pigments" (Paris 1937) and a poem by the Martinican Georges Desportes "Autodafe", dated 1944, and published in Damas's anthology Poètes d'expression française (Paris, 1947) in which he says:

We have stripped off our European clothes, Magnificent brutes and barbarians that we are, And we have danced naked around the high flames—

⁽²⁴⁾ See Roumain. Ibid. Paul Niger: Je n'aime pas l'Afrique in Senghor op. cit. (25) Gratiant, Gilbert, Sans mars ni Vénus Paris, 1944 quoted by Damas, L. in Poètes d'expression française Paris 1947.

Stark naked around the great bonfire of joy,
Stark naked under the palm-trees, stark naked under the bamboos
We shout under the sky of the Tropics,
To the sound of powerful Caribbean jazz,
Our pride in being Negroes,
the glory of being black(26).

Africa is certainly present in the minds of many of the French West Indian négritude writers, and appears as a theme in many poems. The African theme varies from a hankering after a happy African "primitiveness to an identification with the sufferings and struggle of Africa under colonialism. It should be pointed out that African "primitiveness" is conceived of by many writers in the most naive and conventional "European" terms.

Although much has been written about a style of négritude, beyond content and attitudes, with the exception of Césaire himself, it is difficult to find any style or manner in the French West Indian writers which could be described as distinctively African or un-European. Their impassioned denunciations of the "white" world, their nostalgia for Africa, their diatribes against racialism, paternalism and the economic extortions of the colonial powers are couched in literary terms which in spite of the subject matter are European or Western, in the sense that they might easily have been used by any French, English, Spanish, American writer. Common features of the writing of West Indian négritude writers over the last forty years have been: absence of rhyme, punctuation, often of any recognizable rhythm; general violence of expression through the use of emotionally charged words and images, chaotic enumerations, repetitions for the sake of emotional intensification, reiterations and in some case rhythmical nonsense words like: batouque, voon rouh (Césaire). Of surrealism, even modified and utilized selectively, there is very little sign. The meaning of most of these poems is perfectly obvious, indeed many are excessively rhetorical.

Négritude as a set of attitudes leading to revaluation of the Negro values, the world over, in the face of white civilization, appears to have started and gone through a great deal of its development in the literature of the French West Indies. It has been taken up by French African writers since 1945, but the foundations were certainly laid in Haiti, and the French islands of the West Indies.

⁽³⁶⁾ Damas op. cit. p. 159.

Du Tertre and Labat

on

17th Century Slave Life in the French Antilles

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Between the years A.D. 1627 and A.D. 1652, the French succeeded in establishing settlements in a number of islands fringing the Caribbean Sea, notably in St. Kitts, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Grenada and St. Lucia. They called those fringe islands in general Antisles de l'Amerique—the Fore-Isles of America. The name Antilles would seem to be merely a deformation of Ant-Isles. However, it is certain that, at the beginning of the second half of the 17th century, the French possessions in the Antilles formed something of a homogeneous whole—Les Ant-Isles Habitees par les Francois, as they were styled.

To develop those possessions the French unhappily followed the example set by the Spaniards at the beginning of their colonial empire: they introduced Slave Labour. On which subject, of course, much has already been written. But the writings of two 17th century missionary-historians who dealt with it to some extent, would seem to deserve to be better known in the English-speaking world.

The missionary-historians concerned are Frenchmen, and both members of the Order of Friars Preachers, or Dominicans. Both spent a number of years in the Antilles, both wrote profusely, and both left to posterity a quantity of information on the slaves amongst whom they lived, and to whom they ministered. Pere Jean-Baptiste du Tertre did this in his Histoire Generale des Antilles Habitees par les Francois, published in the year 1667. Pere Jean-Baptiste Labat did it his Voyages aux Isles de L'Amerique, published in 1722.

This essay is an attempt to give glimpses of 17th century Slave Life in the French Antilles, according to these two authors.

I. INTRODUCTION OF SLAVE LABOUR IN THE FRENCH ANTILLES

Writing some twenty-five years after his first missionary voyage to the Caribbean area, Pere du Tertre stated that he felt obliged to speak of the wretched slaves whom his country men kept in their service in the isles of the New World. In fact, he dedicated Traite VIII of Tome II of his book to the subject. There were, he said, two big groups of slaves there at that time—the natives of those parts, and the imported Africans. The first group comprised slaves called "Brasiliens", that is natives of the Portuguese colony of Brazil; and "Arouagues", that is natives of the American mainland who were the mortal enemies of the Caribs—so presumably Arawaks. There were no Caribs in the group, because the warlike Caribs preferred death to menial labour.

The "Brasiliens" were brought by the French colonists from Dutch adventurers, who captured them during the war between their nation and the Portuguese. The "Arouagues" were purchased from the Caribs themselves, who brought them back to the isles as prisoners after raids, for instance, on the Orinoco basin. Both these classes of slaves accepted to do for their European masters the tasks which pleased them, and on condition that they were not considered as slaves. In reality, neither class ever became slaves in the strict sense of the word, and the French colonists soon realized that they could not count upon them for the exploitation of the fertile lands which they wanted to cultivate. This fact explains, thoughit does not excuse, the introduction of African slave labour into the French Antilles.

The second group of slaves referred to by du Tertre is, of course, that of the imported Africans. To furnish their plantations with hands capable of doing the strenuous work that the natives of the isles or the mainland would not do, the French colonists stooped to buying human beings of African origin. It was not difficult to procure them, for the infamous Slave Trade, started by the Portuguese in the 15th century, was already in full swing. At first the French Court refused to sanction the introduction of Negro slaves into the colonies, but Louis XIII was prevailed upon to allow it, in the hope that the Africans in question would have a favourable opportunity of embracing Christianity.⁵

On his side, Labat gives some thirty consecutive pages of his book *Voyages aux Isles de L'Amerique* to the Negro slaves, and has many references to them elsewhere in this work. He does not treat the subject as analytically as du Tertre, but he has much shrewd comment to make.

However, the story of the procuring of the early Negro slaves for the French Antilles is a sordid and shameful one. According to du Tertre, all the Negroes in question came from Africa, from the coasts of Guinea, Angola, Senegal and Cape Verde. Labat, writing some fifty years after du Tertre states that most of the Negro slaves of the French isles were furnished by two slave-trading companies—"les Compagnies de Guinee et de Senegal". The Guinea Company had its markets and forts at places known as Benin, Jura, Arda, etcetera; the Senegal Company had its own in the neighbourhood of the Senegal and Gambia rivers.

Du Tertre adds that his compatriots, like the Dutch, captured a considerable number of Negroes from the Spanish and Portuguese engaged in the Slave Trade, and then sold those who survived the trans-shipment. Sometimes a captain took 700 Negroes in a fray, and arrived in the Antilles with 200 for sale. 6

Labat speaks of Negroes captured by the French from enemy ships in war-time, or from enemy islands in the course of raids; and of Negroes purchased illicitly from the English, Dutch and Danish, in times of peace.⁷

For the slave-traders who went to the coasts of Africa to get their cargoes of human merchandise, du Tertre says that, for French, Spanish, English Portuguese and Dutch, the procedure was on these lines. When a slave ship arrived off the African coast, the merchant would address himself to the

petty king of the place or the governor of the province. The persons in question, would sell them these poor wretches, men, women and children of all ages, for bars of iron, small pieces of silver, brandy, linen, and other goods in great demand in those lands.

Labat also gives a list of objects for which the slaves were bartered, and includes in it guns, powder, paper, and shells called "bouges" which served as money along the African coast.

These petty kings and governors, according to du Tertre, generally put up for sale three kinds of persons. First, their prisoners of war; secondly, criminals condemned to death; thirdly, thieves condemned to banishment. Labat's list is somewhat different. He begins by malefactors, people condemned to death, and the rest; then come prisoners of war; in the third place come the particular slaves of the princes or of others to whom the princes have given slaves; in fine, and above all, people who have been stolen. Manstealing, he says, woman-stealing, child-stealing, it is all tolerated if not instigated by the princes; it is the specialized commerce of certain scoundrels.

Apart from the petty kings and governors, continues Labat, others engage in the shameful trade, kidnapping and so on. He relates the story of a young slave whom he had himself in the Antilles. The boy was born in Africa. One day his father, a kind of "Captain", sent him, together with his brother, on an errand outside the village. Unhappily for them, they ran into some slave-merchants or slave-stealers. These scoundrels promptly put the boys into two sacks, took them to the office or market of the Slave Company, and sold them. Eventually the boys were sent out to the colonies.⁸

In some cases, if not all, the victims of this horrible market were marked with a red hot iron, and put into fetters. According to Labat, they were all chained together, two by two, during the voyage across the Atlantic.⁹

Of that voyage from the coasts of Africa to the isles of the French Antilles, perhaps the least said the better. Judging by the description and the pictures that have come down to us, atrocious is the only word to fit that long journey of horror. Du Tertre and Labat did not seem to have had statistics to hand with regard to the number of Africans who died on that voyage across the Atlantic, but it has since been estimated that 12½ per cent. of them lost their lives during that passage to the West Indies.

Of the arrival of the slave ships in the French Antilles, du Tertre and Labat do not say much to enlighten us on the real condition of the captives. However, we do learn from them that the wretched slaves arrived extenuated by hunger and thirst. It is Labat who gives this detail. He, too, it is who tells us that the newly arrived slaves were marketed somewhat like animals. Around the year 1698 a dozen African slaves were bought for 5,700 francs in Martinique. That sum may have corresponded roughly to £300 sterling at that time. ¹⁰

II. QUARTERS, FURNITURE, LIVE-STOCK, GARDENS

An early Lieutenant-General of the French King in the Antilles, de Poincy, tried to lodge his seven or eight hundred slaves in stone-and-brick quarters inside a walled compound. It was called "Ville d'Angole"—Angola City—

according to du Tertre. But a part of these model quarters got burnt down, and there was apparently no more building of homes for slaves in stone-and-brick, then and there. The system of rough wooden quarters for the slaves, to leeward of the "great house" of the estate, but near enough to it for proper supervision, would seem to have become the general rule.¹¹

At first, says du Tertre, blood relations among the slaves grouped their huts together, leaving ten or twelve yards space between them. When there was a big number of the same family, they would generally build in a circle, and leave an open space in the middle. This kind of arrangement must have been sacrificed later to the desire of the colonists for symmetry and uniformity. Labat mentions the huts being built in his day in one or several streets; and new huts had to be built of the same length, width and height; moreover, fifteen to twenty feet had to be left between them.

In the early days of colonial slavery, according to du Tertre, married couples had a hut for themselves and their small children. When the children became big, the father took care to build them a hut near his own. Each unmarried slave had his little hut apart.

What exactly were those huts? The name given them in du Tertre's time is significant, although he seems to use the same word for the estate houses of the masters. It was "cases", and it derived from the classical Latin word "casa". Now the latter word was used to indicate a simple or poorly built house, cottage, cabin and the rest. Judging by the descriptions which both du Tertre and Labat give of the slaves' dwellings, the name was most appropriate. In fact, du Tertre thought that they corresponded aptly to the rustic dwellings of the Golden Age mentioned by Seneca—the shelters formed with forked poles as uprights, and with sticks and foliage as roof.

In du Tertre's day, the slaves' huts were scarcely more than nine to ten feet long, six feet wide, and ten to twelve feet high. At the four corners stood a forked pole, whilst two other higher forked poles supported the roof. This was of reeds, and it generally reached down to a foot above the ground. When a roof of this kind was not wanted, the slaves constructed a kind of palisade of big stakes, standing side by side, to serve as walls. In both instances, the huts were well sealed against the fresh night air. Light entered by a door five feet high.

Some fifty years later, in Labat's day, the slaves' huts appear to have been on a bigger scale. They were generally thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide, but were sometimes divided into two, so as to lodge two families. As before, the rafters often went down to the ground; the roof was made of cane trash, reeds or palm leaves. A window seems also to have become by then the general rule. 12

A number of the huts were enclosed with light fencing. Some of the slaves would put up a little hut near their dwelling quarters which served as kitchen. But most of them, says Labat, did their cooking in the living quarters themselves: they kept a fire going there night as well as day. As a result, their huts always smelt of smoke.

With regard to the slaves' beds and bedding, both du Tertre and Labat give interesting details. The former says very candidly that the beds were enough to frighten anyone: they looked more apt to torture a body than to procure it the rest necessary for the restoration of strength. Made of branches from trees, interwoven like a hurdle, they were raised 3 feet above the ground on 4 big sticks. There were no sheets to the beds, no straw mattresses, and no blankets. A few leaves of the "balizier" palm served as mattresses, after the main ribs of the leaves had been removed. And a few wretched rags served as protection against the cold—to which the slaves were all the more sensitive for having been exposed to the extreme heat of the sun all the day long. 13

However, in Labat's day, things would seem to have improved a little. He says that the slaves' beds consisted of 2 or 3 boards over traverse strips supported by small forked poles. These boards were sometimes covered with a kind of matting made from the ribs of palm leaves. A log of wood served as pillow. It must all still have been of a penitential nature. But Labat adds that, when the slave owners were fairly reasonable, they would give the slaves some old blankets or other materials to cover themselves with. He remarks also that there were separate beds for husband and wife, and for the children once they reached the age of 7 or 8 years. ¹⁴

As for the furnishing of the slaves' huts, things were very primitive at first. Du Tertre admits that, in the way of furniture, the Negroes of his day were not any better off than the native Caribs. Their coffers and cupboards, he says, consisted of a few "callebasses" of different sizes. In these they kept their little belongings and, if they had any, their alcohol. They kept their food in these rustic utensils as well. 15

Fifty years later, matters had somewhat improved. Labat says that, in addition to the "callebasses", the slaves were using cooking-pots ("canaris"), benches, tables and a few wooden utensils. Those who were a little better off, he adds, had a coffer or two to keep their clothes. 16

To add to the meagre furnishing of their huts and, no doubt, to supplement their daily rations, some of the slaves used to run a little commerce of their own. They were allowed, for instance, to rear chicken at their homes and, according to du Tertre, succeeded at it exceedingly well. When a vessel arrived from France, those who had a couple of chicken ready would offer them to the Captain of the ship. The Captain, tired of the salted fare of the long Atlantic crossing, would buy the chicken at four times their worth. He would pay for them with linen, brandy or something else of which the slaves had need.

Du Tertre adds, that, formerly, the slaves had been allowed to rear pigs for themselves, but that favour had been withdrawn—because the slaves had taken so much care of their own pigs that they allowed those of their masters to die of hunger. But it would seem that Labat's day, pig-keeping among the slaves had again become the general rule. He mentions that pigs as well as fowls were kept alongside the slaves' living quarters. To avoid the difficulty referred to by du Tertre, he recommended that the slaves' pigs

should be kept together with those of their masters. He adds that, when the slaves sold their pigs, they had to give their masters first option of buying.¹⁷

Du Tertre speaks of some of the Negroes having the Saturdays free, as did the Brazilian slaves, in order to feed and keep themselves. They went to work on Saturdays, he says, for colonists other than their masters. These colonists would give them their food for the day, plus "dix livres de petun"—presumably ten pounds of uncured tobacco. He adds that the masters of these "Free-Saturday "slaves would set aside a fairly big piece of land on their estates for them. There the slaves were free to plant for themselves peas, sweet potatoes, manioc and yams—which they preferred to everything else. One portion of this reserved land, moreover, was used for kitchengardening. The women cultivated kitchen herbs there, cucumber, melons of all kinds and pumpkins. These articles would be taken by the men to the shops for sale between the two Masses on Sundays and Feasts. Those who were careful, and who did not squander the tobacco that they thus earned, notes du Tertre, could feed themselves and look after themselves fairly well. 18

On the same subject, Labat mentions that some of the slaves had little kitchen gardens in palisaded enclosures around their huts. He also refers to pieces of land being set aside on the estates for the slaves to cultivate tobacco, sweet potatoes, yams and the rest, as if it had become a general practice. This produce they either consumed or sold. The slaves were allowed to work these gardens of theirs, he says, on Feasts, and during the time which they managed to save on the hours allotted for their meals. Some of the slaves were highly successful at this little commerce, he adds. They looked after themselves and their families remarkably well. 19

III. FOOD, DRINK, CLOTHES

In the section of his chapter on Negro Slaves which deals with the way in which they were fed, du Tertre says that, as the food of the slaves depended on their masters, it varied from estate house to estate house, according to the dispositions of the owner. Some were better fed than others but, to tell the truth, they were all fed in pitiful fashion. So much so that, if they had not shifted for themselves, they would have suffered considerably. This shifting for themselves consisted, presumably, in the chicken-rearing, pig-rearing already referred to.

So badly fed were some of the slaves in Martinque at one time, says du Tertre, that Governor du Parquet published an ordinance regulating the rations which slave owners had to provide for their Negroes. Every week they were to supply at least 2 pounds of meat per head in the off season, and 3 pounds when the vessels arrived with provisions from France. In addition to that, the slaves were given cassava flour and peas, which they boiled with a little fat.

In general, at each estate house an old Negress, an expectant mother, or a hired French worker, looked after the slaves' cooking whilst they were at their tasks. When dinner-time arrived, all were called to the meal. The overseer ("le Commandeur") would then deal out portions, and the slaves would take away their shares to their huts, to eat as they liked. When they

were working at some distance from the estate house, their dinners were carried to them on the spot, and they all ate together.

Sometimes the master of an estate would hand over a barrel of meat at one time. This would be distributed to the slaves every Sunday, together with a quantity of cassava flour and peas. In which case, each Negro family did its cooking apart, according to personal methods and tastes. How they managed to keep in better health than many of the colonists with so little meat, was a matter of surprise for du Tertre. It is true that they supplemented their diet with yams, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, coarse millet, herbs and certain beans called "féves de sept ans". But the mixtures which they concocted with such ingredients did not strike our missionary-historian as appetising.²⁰

Labat also says that the slaves supplemented their meagre rations with foodstuffs from their gardens. He also notes that they used to eat the crabs and frogs that they caught, and quite a lot of bananas—"les figues et les bananes". They only killed their chicken for themselves when they were sick, and their pigs when they had some kind of feast. Outside these two cases, they sold their chicken and pigs, and spent the money they got from them to buy fish and salted meat—which, he remarks, did them more good.²¹

The slaves were naturally better off for food when there was plenty of rain. Dry spells of weather generally meant great hardships for them. When there were few or no vegetables in the gardens, they had to be content with cassava flour—and their supply of that was limited.

Under such conditions, praedial larceny had many an opportunity to flourish. This was particularly the case, says du Tertre, among the slaves whose masters tried to substitute free Saturdays in the gardens for regular rations. Not only were the masters in question frequently robbed, but their neighbours were so also. Another case of dishonesty, presumably connected with the poor feeding of the slaves, was that of pigs and horses on some of the estates dying a premature death. As dead animals were habitually thrown out far from the estate house, some of the slaves would deliberately cause a pig or horse to die—and then eat it when it had been thrown out. The trick was discovered, and an official ordinance prescribed that dead animals must be dumped far out at sea. The premature deaths ceased after that.²²

One class of slaves, says du Tertre, got very good food rations. It was the sugar-boilers, who worked in 12 hour shifts—one from midday to midnight, the other from midnight to midday. Their task was hard, they had no break at all during the shift, and so the masters spared neither meat nor drink in their case.

Speaking of drink, as may be well imagined, water was the ordinary drink of the slaves. In that, at least, they were not rationed, for, as du Tertre remarks, they had to fetch it themselves. However, he adds that alcohol was generally given to the Negroes when they had some particularly hard work to do, or when they were replanting tobacco in heavy rain. Moreover, after the colonists learnt how to extract alcohol as a side product of sugar, it became the practice on certain estates to give the slaves some from time to time.

Provided that those in charge of the slaves were honest and serious! If they were not, they would consume in drinking bouts with their friends the liqueur they were supposed to give to the slaves.²³

Labat says that it was not advisable to let newcomers from Africa drink all the water they felt like drinking, and still less so alcohol. He had in mind the ailments to which newcomers were subject.²⁴

A peculiarity of diet among certain slaves, the "Aradas", is mentioned by Labat. They are dogs, and our missionary-historian says he was several times tempted to taste their roast dog. Shame only kept him from doing so. However, the "Aradas" born in the colonies gave up the practice.

Another custom connected with the eating of the slaves is recorded by Labat. He says that husband and wife rarely ate together. The husband ate first, waited on by wife and children. They ate afterwards, apart. When Labat told a slave in Guadeloupe that he found this custom strange, and pointed out that the Governor ate every day with his wife, the slave explained. White people might be right sometimes, he said, and so might Negroes. When one considered how proud, how disobedient to their husbands the white women were, he persisted, one had to admit that the Negroes, who kept their wives well in their proper place, showed more wisdom and experience in the matter than the whites.²⁵

With regard to the slaves' clothing, the colonists obviously could not leave these poor wretches in the nudity which characterized their arrival from Africa. They gave them clothes—but not much beyond the strict minimum. On working days, the men wore coarse linen drawers and a bonnet; the women wore a kind of linen skirt, reaching sometimes to their ankles, but often not to their knees. Neither men nor women had shoes and stockings.

However, both du Tertre and Labat mention the special clothes which the slaves wore on Sundays and Feasts. At first the men had a shirt and coloured drawers, as well as a hat. The women had a "chemise" and a shirt of white linen or of coloured "serge". That was all the masters were obliged to furnish them with, says du Tertre. If they wanted something more in the way of finery, they had to find it themselves. They often did.

As time went on, the men added to their drawers what Labat calls a "candale"—an affair apparently something like a light kilt. They also embellished their shirts sometimes with silver buttons or ribbons. With regard to the women, their get-up on Sundays and Feasts would seem to have become more and more elaborate, as they managed to find the wherewithal. A coloured underskirt beneath a white dress tended to become the fashion, whilst an elaborate kind of bodice replaced the "chemise" of former days. But even on Sundays and Feasts, bare feet seem still to have been the general rule. Sometimes the lacqueys of certain persons of quality were served with footwear.

In early colonial times the slaves were allowed Saturday afternoons to wash and mend their clothes. Unfortunately this humane custom was disappearing in du Tertre's time, and many slaves then were obliged to take time off from their sleep to do their washing and mending, or to do it on Sundays and Feasts.

With regard to the children's clothes, du Tertre says that, as a rule, all the slaves' children went about completely naked until they were 4 or 5 years old. At that age they were put into little robes of coarse linen. They were these until they were 9 or 10, when the boys were dressed like their fathers, and the girls like their mothers.

Some of the slaves tried to make their hair look longer by having recourse to cotton thread. The result, says du Tertre, made one think of the snake-hair of Medusa. Other slaves would shave their heads to form special designs. A number of Negroes, particularly those from Angola, carried out a kind of tattoo work on their face, chest, arms and shoulders.

In the course of time, ear-rings were worn by some of the slaves, both men and women. Finger-rings, bracelets, necklaces and crosses of silver or gold were worn by some of the women on ceremonial occasions.²⁶

IV. WORK, RECREATION

More than anybody else, in du Tertre's opinion, the Negro slaves of the Antilles felt the penal retribution of toil laid upon the children of Adam by the Creator. Since the colonists only went out to the Isles to amass wealth, he shrewdly remarks, they made a point of getting out of their Negroes all the work that they possibly could. Not only had the slaves to work from morning to night, he says, but they also had to give a part of their night toil for their masters, particularly at the time of the tobacco crop.

Labat, for his part, complained of certain colonists whose avarice and cruelty forced slaves newly arrived from Africa to set to work at once. In his opinion, the proper thing was, after giving the new arrivals 7 or 8 days of rest and cure, to give them light tasks so as to get them accustomed to heavy toil. He also recommended placing new arrivals with old hands: these were generally ready to make newcomers feel at home, and to initiate them into the ways of colonial slavery.²⁷

In spite, however, of the long, hard tasks laid upon the slaves, they had their recreations. Both du Tertre and Labat give details on the ways in which they spent their leisure hours.

All the slaves, men and women, boys and girls of 11 to 12 years upwards, says du Tertre, had to work. Sometimes the tasks of the women were not as heavy as those of the men. Special consideration was generally given to women nearing confinement. Slaves who accompanied officers on horseback had to set to work when they returned from rides. But the Negro women employed by the officers' wives, as servants or nurses, were dispensed from the tasks in the fields and the rest: they were no longer subject to the jurisdiction of the overseers. Again, Negroes employed at hunting or fishing for their masters' tables generally had no other occupation. Some of the slaves learnt trades, and proved to be quite good at carpentry, masonry, tailoring, etcetera, on their masters' estates.

For du Tertre, as for Aristotle whom he quotes, the slaves were the *instru*ments of the masters. He found, however, three things which rendered the slaves' work extremely painful. The first of these was the tropical heat: exposed as they were all day to the fierce rays of the sun, they lived in a kind of perpetual bath of perspiration. In the second place, he counted the bad temper of the overseers under whom the slaves had to work. These people, either under pretence of zeal, or to make up for the time they had lost in drinking bouts, were sometimes most cruel. They would drive the poor slaves to work with a harshness of which their masters if they knew it would certainly not approve. They would beat the slaves whenever the fancy took them. As a result, insists du Tertre, many Negroes died at their tasks, without the cause of their death being known, and without their masters even knowing that they were ill. However, what rendered the slaves' work painful and distressing above all, thought du Tertre, was the fact that they knew all their toil would profit them nothing.

It would seem that the cultivation of tobacco was the chief occupation of the slaves in du Tertre's time. Fifty years later, in Labat's day, the production of sugar would appear to have taken the lead. Both must have been strenuous, particularly as everything practically had to be done by hand. There were, of course, countless other jobs to be done on a big estate.²⁸

Nevertheless, according to du Tertre, the Negro slaves, unlike the Jews in captivity, were as joyful in slavery as they would have been in complete freedom. Hardly a Sunday or a Feast passed, he says, but what several Negroes of a same plantation, or those of neighbouring plantations, met together for recreation. They would set to dancing after the fashion of their own country. Sometimes it would be to the rhythm of their songs; sometimes to the beat of a drum, which consisted of a skin stretched over a piece of hollowed-out tree trunk. In this case, the drummer held the drum between his knees, and played on it with his fingers. When no drum was to be had, people would sometimes try to get music out of two "callebasses" filled with small stones.

What struck du Tertre about the slaves' dancing was the gymnastics which they went through during this form of recreation. He often wondered, he says, how they could manage to move after such violent exercise, yet they seemed as fresh after it as if they had not danced at all. They would spend not only the whole Sunday afternoon at dancing, but would sometimes keep it up all through the night—breaking up merely in time to be ready for the day's toil.

Even the little children took part in these fetes, says du Tertre. Whilst the men and women danced and jumped with all their might, the children imitated them in a dance of their own. They sang and danced till sleep overtook them.

When the slaves did not have the dances just mentioned, adds du Tertre, they would pay visits or receive company. They were most hospitable, and would do their utmost to give their visitors a good time. Several chickens and a quantity of alcohol might be offered to visiting slaves. In general, moreover, the host of the day would invite some of his friends to the feast. These, in turn, would invite the visitors to take something to drink (when they had something to offer) at their own huts.

The greatest rejoicings among the slaves in du Tertre's day took place at the christening of their children. On that occasion they would invite all the Negroes of their place of origin, as well as those of the estate house where they worked. They were ready even to sell all that they had, rather than not be able to offer alcohol in honour of the new-born child. As a rule, when the godparents of the child were friends of their masters, the sponsors would contribute towards the feast.

The slaves had great rejoicings also when their children got married, says du Tertre. But on that occasion it was the masters who stood the expense of the fete, and who provided alcohol not only for the slaves who got married but also for the guests. After the wedding feast the slaves would dance all through the day and all through the night—and sometimes all next day, when the master was well disposed.²⁹

Labat says that the slaves were fond of gambling and dancing. They had a game for stakes or wagers, brought from Africa, that corresponded roughly to gaming with dice. Four shells called "bouges" were used as dice, and also as stakes. He adds that a number of slaves born in the Isles had learnt to play cards, from seeing their masters play. It had not done them any good, he remarks.

Dancing, however, says Labat, was the favourite passion of the slaves. When their masters would not allow them to dance on the estate, they would walk miles after leaving the sugar factory at Saturday midnight, in order to reach some place where they knew there was a dance. From different parts of Africa came different dances.

Of all the dances indulged in by the slaves, remarks Labat, the one called "Le Calenda" was the general favourite. It came from the coast of Guinea. Two drums accompanied it: "le grand tambour" observed a certain rhythm, but the "baboula" just made noise as fast as it could. The dancers were lined up in two lines, men on one side, women on the other. Spectators formed a ring around them. Somebody improvised a song, others joined in the chorus, there was much beating of hands. What followed had better not be described here. Labat says the "Calenda" was immodest, lascivious, infamous. There were ordinances in the Isles to forbid this dance—but the slaves managed to dance it all the same. To make them give it up, if possible, the French colonists taught them a number of respectable dances, e.g., the minuet. But the "Calenda" was a passion with them.

In Labat's day, weddings held first place among the festivities of the slaves. On such occasions, their masters provided costumes for the brides and bridegroom. They also provided a considerable amount to eat and drink. But all the slaves of the estate, and others invited to the wedding, also made their contribution: they would bring something for the table, a present for the newly-weds. As in du Tertre's time, hospitality was a characteristic among them.³⁰

V. HOME LIFE, INTIMATE CIRCLES, ESPRIT DE CORPS

The caption just enunciated might appear to be a euphuism when employed in connection with the victims of slavery in the French Antilles. There is, however, a reason for using it. In spite of the horrors of slavery, the early slaves of the region in question did manage to build up a kind of family life that merited the name of home. They built up circles of friends as well. And

the very bonds of slavery established a kind of solidarity amongst them. Some of these conclusions may have already been deduced from facts mentioned in previous paragraphs on their dwellings and recreations. The fact that marriage among the slaves was recognized and practised in the French Antilles in the 17th century, enabled them to establish and maintain a certain embryo of social life.

Du Tertre is emphatic in saying that marriage among the slaves was not only allowed but also strongly encouraged. He does not go so far as to say that the French colonists of his day had only supernatural views in adopting this attitude towards slave marriage. He admits their utilitarian motives. "Our French people", he says, "take care to marry them (the slaves) as early as possible, so as to get children from them." He adds that the colonists deserve praise for doing "all that they can in order to give their slaves wives from their own country of origin, of whom they are incomparably more fond than of other women." Efforts were made in general, he says, to arrange marriages between slaves of two different masters, when the slaves in question had fallen in love. He mentions, however, that there were exceptions to this rule, when a master did not want to part with a valuable slave: he would practically force his slave to marry a Negress from another country, so as to retain his services. Du Tertre adds that this practice was at the root of many unhappy unions among the slaves. "

Fifty years later, judging by what Labat relates, marriage was still the general rule among the slaves. Early marriage was advisable for moral reasons, he says. As already stated, he mentions that marriage was the occasion of the biggest festivities kept by the Negroes. He points out, however, that not only the consent of the masters had to be obtained, but that of the godfathers and godmothers, the relatives and principal friends of both families, was necessary as well. Attention was generally paid, he adds, to matching slaves of the same standing: social distinctions of a sort existed among them, particularly among those born in the Isles—"les negres creoles". 32

So prolific were the Negro women, says du Tertre, that they seemed to bear children like the Jewish women in Egypt at the time of Moses: the more wretched their condition, the more babies they bore. As for midwives, most of the slave mothers had no need of them. For five or six months after their birth, babies were only given their mothers' milk. After which, the mothers would chew grilled potatoes, yams or millet, and give them the emulsion. To safeguard the health of their babies, the mothers observed strict continency until they severed them from the breast.

Baby clothes were definitely not a feature of the slave huts, and cradles were not found there either. The babies remained completely naked, and slept in a kind of linen hammock above their mothers' beds. A piece of string attached to the hammocks allowed the mothers to rock the little ones when they cried.

When the slave mothers went to work in the fields, they took their babies along with them. They bound them to their backs by means of strips of cloth called "pannes". However much they shook them up at their tasks, says du Tertre, their babies did not lose a bit of their sleep.

At six or seven months, the slave babies began to crawl. They would fall many a time when they were trying to walk, remarks du Tertre, but they always fell well, and laughed instead of crying. Soon after they had reached that stage, their mothers no longer carried them on their backs when at work in the fields: they put them down on the ground near themselves. There the little ones stayed for hours beneath a grilling sun, sleeping or playing—and without getting sick. Du Tertre found it rather extraordinary. He adds that mothers, and even fathers, would carry their children on their backs, up to the age of six or seven years, when they went on long journeys.

However, when the children reached the age of three or four years, their mothers left them in the huts, under the care of a six-or-seven-year old girl, if there were one in the family. If there were none such, the babies were confided to the care of the Negress who had charge of the slaves' kitchen. When the parents of the children returned from work, at midday or in the evening, the first thing they did was to call their little ones, or to go to look for them at their neighbours' dwellings. They did not eat until they had found them.

The best way to win the affection of the slaves, says du Tertre, was to show kindness to their children. They would do anything for those who were kind to their little ones. On the other hand, they could not bear to see their children punished, or to hear them cry. They would rush to the scene of trouble, and express their lively displeasure at the punishment that was being meted out, if that were the case: they would have preferred to be beaten in their children's place. Du Tertre says that he had never seen slaves less masters of their anger, than when the interests of their poor children were at stake.³³

With regard to the sicknesses and diseases from which the slaves, adults and children, suffered, one would have liked du Tertre and Labat to say more than they have done. Du Tertre does say that Yaws ("Pian") occurred among the Negroes, and that they were generally treated for it when it was too late. Again, Labat remarks that when the slaves felt unwell, they tied up their heads, made themselves perspire, and drank nothing but hot water.

Both these missionary-historians mention, however, that blood-letting was resorted to in some cases for the Negroes. Du Tertre speaks of drawing blood from the slaves' foreheads, when they got violent headaches through working in the blazing sun. Labat recommends a gentle blood-letting before the entry into work of newcomers from Africa. To understand this, it must be remembered that the bleeding of patients was a common remedy for a number of sicknesses in the 17th century, and even later.³⁴

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Apart from their close relations, the slaves had what might be called their intimate circles. In these, of course, people from their own country of origin had a special place. Others who had a special, and very special place, were godparents. Labat says it was difficult to imagine the respect, obedience, submission and gratitude which the slaves manifested towards their godfathers and godmothers. From the moment, he remarks, that a Negro asked someone to stand for his child at the font, it seemed as if he ceded his rights over the child to him. Godchildren and the children of their godparents

called themselves brothers and sisters, and often loved each other more tenderly than real brothers and sisters.

Most of the slaves who could manage it, would keep a little fete for their parents and friends on their birthday or feast-day—"le jour de leur fete". Labat says that children even thought themselves obliged to do so after their father's death. In some cases, godchildren would undertake to honour the memory of their godparents in this way.⁸⁵

In general, the slaves of the Isles were well-disposed towards each other, and ready to help each other. If one of them had done something wrong, they would often go in a group to the master, and ask pardon for the culprit. In order to entertain or help some of their compatriots whom they knew to be in need, they would sometimes go without food themselves. Sickness, and death particularly, were occasions when their "esprit de corps" showed itself. On the death of a slave, no matter whether he had relatives or not, all the Negroes on the estate wept for him, and made a tremendous noise. After the burial, the friends and compatriots of the deceased would go to his grave and pray for his soul. If they were able, they would go to the Parish Priest and ask him to say Masses for the slave who had died.

If a slave among their friends ran away from his master, and became what the French called "marron", the Negroes would hide him in their huts. They constructed hiding-holes there so well, says Labat, that it was practically impossible to discover the runaway.³⁶

VI-TRAITS OF CHARACTER, FAILINGS, PUNISHMENTS

Both du Tertre and Labat were shrewd psychologists, and made copious observations in their writings on the moral make-up of the slaves, and the faults into which they commonly fell. Both also have spoken of the chastisements meted out to the slaves by their masters or overseers. Obviously the subject is one that has its unpleasant side, but glimpses of slave life in the 17th century would be incomplete without some reference to it. An important point to make, on approaching the subject, is that the slaves were practically at the mercy of their masters, and of those whom the masters delegated to supervise them. Although the judicial authorities in the Isles intervened in certain cases, the control exercised over the slaves by their masters was definitely despotic. In consequence, good, well-behaved, contented slaves might be found on estates where the masters and overseers were just and kind; the opposite, where they were not.

The slaves, in fact, were gay or melancholic, laborious or lazy, friendly or hostile, says du Tertre, according to the treatment that they received from their masters and overseers. When they were treated humanely and well fed, they were an air of happiness on their faces, and were ready to do anything they were told to do. When they were treated harshly, it was easy to see the melancholy that consumed them.

Among their good qualities, love for their families, relatives, friends and countrymen, might be given first place. This trait has already been stressed. Suffice it to say that both du Tertre and Labat were struck by it. However,

there were quarrels sometimes between slaves of the same estate, and between those of different estates. In which case, vindictiveness might cause much trouble.

To masters who were good to them, the slaves would show real affection, and go to extraordinary lengths to prove it. Du Tertre relates how the slaves of a certain Frenchman of whom they were very fond, took food to him in the woods when he was hunted by rebels, refused to disclose his hiding-place, and suffered torture rather than betray him. Labat bears out du Tertre's statements on the subject by describing how some slaves saved his life on one occasion: they pulled him out of his saddle when a party of Englishmen were about to fire on him in Guadeloupe, and threw themselves between the attackers and himself.

This trait of courage in danger, apart from affection for good masters, is brought out by du Tertre. He says that, in all the quarrels which the French had with the English at one time in St. Kitts, the slaves of the French colonists were not less brave than their masters in opposing the English. Labat notes that the slaves were patient, and could despise pain, danger and death.³⁷

One would like to say more about the slaves' good qualities, but mention must be made of their failings as well. To begin with the less serious, du Tertre says they were very fond of mocking others. They would seize upon the slightest faults of the French colonists, and would laugh and talk about anything reprehensible that they did. At their work they hummed songs, in which they went over all that their masters or overseers did to them, the good things and the bad. Labat also says that the slaves excelled in detecting the faults of others, particularly those of the white people. They would invent nicknames that were really appropriate—and that stuck.

As in other children of Adam, so in the slaves, vanity and pride generally had a big part in the moral make-up. Both du Tertre and Labat remarked this. To keep their slaves from adopting an insolent attitude, the colonists thought themselves obliged to adopt a haughty one themselves. Labat tells the story of a slave boy who was very faithful, well behaved, intelligent and affectionate—but extremely vain and proud. He resented being corrected of his faults, and writhed under humiliations. His great joy was to see some poor white man arrive at the presbytery in search of alms. He would hurry to Pere Labat and say: "Father, there is a poor white man at the door, asking for alms." When the missionary gave him something to take to the beggar, the slave boy would hand over the alms and say: "There you are, poor white man. That is what my master sends you." Sometimes he would give the beggar something of his own, when he thought Labat could hear him—just for the pleasure of calling the beggar "poor white man" again. 38

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However, du Tertre says that the five principal faults into which the slaves fell were: idleness, petty thieving, disobedience, running away from their masters, and sedition. To the first of these, idleness, many newcomers from Africa may have been addicted, for they had not been accustomed to hard work in their country of origin. Many who had long been in the Isles may have been reluctant to work for the very reason that they drew no profit from it whatever. But hard work was what their masters exacted.

Petty thieving appears to have had a terrible attraction for the slaves. It is possible that the state of poverty in which they lived had something to do with this failing, but du Tertre was told by the slaves themselves that it was the same thing in the lands from which they came. Labat remarks that the slaves were rather smart at hiding the objects which they had stolen. When confronted on the subject of stealing something, they assumed an air of astonished and pained innocence. Their last resource, when taken to task by somebody who knew their ways, was to say that the Devil had played them a trick.

Once slavery became a "fait accompli" in the French Antilles, the very fabric of it depended on the obedience of the slaves. A most rigorous obedience was, in fact, exacted from them. However, human nature being what it is, this obedience was not always forthcoming.

To run away from a master and turn "marron" in the woods, was not an uncommon thing among the slaves. Du Tertre thought that those who ran away shortly after their arrival from Africa, did so to avoid the hard work to which they were not accustomed in their own country. As for those who ran away after being a long time in the Isles, he found that they did so on account of the bad treatment which they received on the estate, or because they had not enough to eat.

Sometimes exasperated slaves went to the extremity of revolting against constituted authority. There were seditions and rebellions on limited scales. Such upheavals evidently endangered the life and property of the colonists as a whole. They were considered as crimes against the State, the public welfare.

How were the slaves punished for these various offences? As in slavery even, the punishment was supposed to fit the crime, there were degrees in the chastisements. Many were definitely barbarous.

For idleness, says du Tertre, the usual punishment was a few cuts of the whip by the overseer. In reality, the whip was a "lianne", a thick, pliable creeper, capable of inflicting severe pain. It might tear off the skin or raise ugly weals.

Petty thieving was punished in divers ways. Colonists were allowed to beat slaves whom they found stealing on their estates, or in their houses, says du Tertre. At night they were allowed to use firearms against thieves and robbers. Sometimes culprits of this class were tied up during the day at a kind of stocks called "carcan". There were cases of slaves having their ears cut off for stealing.

Disobedience was rigorously punished, remarks du Tertre. Lashes of the "lianne" were not spared on the slave who dared to refuse to do what what the overseer ordered him to do. However, it would seem that the French punished diobedience less cruelly than the Spaniards.

Running away from a master, especially when it was accompanied by attempts to draw others away as well, was castigated by frightful flogging. To prevent gangrene from setting in after the flogging, the wounds of the slaves were rubbed with a solution of salt, peppers and lime-juice. This of course

added considerably to the pain of the wounds. When slaves had run away several times they were fettered—but in such a way that they could work and walk. In some cases, says du Tertre, they had to wear their irons for the rest of their lives.

Revolt, sedition, rebellion, fell under the competence of the public authorities. Death was the penalty, although only the ringleaders were executed: the others were punished by their own masters as fugitives. The executions were carried out in a barbarous way, and generally in the presence of all the slaves of the district—to teach them a lesson, as was supposed.

Du Tertre ends his section on the punishments meted out to the slaves by an appeal to the slaves' masters. He exhorts them to treat their Negroes charitably, to remember that they are their brothers through Baptism. And he begs them to watch over their overseers—who often reduced the slaves to despair and to flight.³⁹

VII. RELIGION

Bad as may have been the condition of the slaves of the French Antilles in the 17th century, with regard to being bought and sold, with regard to work and life in general, they enjoyed one great advantage over the early slaves of the British and Dutch West Indies. They were allowed, encouraged even, to embrace Christianity and practise it, whereas the early slaves of Barbados were not allowed to become Christians, and those of Antigua and St. Eustatius were denied Baptism until they were in danger of death—and did not always obtain it then.⁴⁰

This difference of attitude on the part of the colonists of the French Isles was no doubt due to the policy initiated by Louis XIII. That monarch only agreed to the introduction of slave labour into his overseas dominions when he had been convinced that the Africans would thus have an opportunity of becoming Christians. From the early days of French colonialism, the ministrations of the Catholic Church were at the disposal of both "bond and free". Later on, in 1685, the "Code Noir" was to prescribe that all the slaves in the French Isles were to be baptised and instructed in the Catholic Religion.

In his book on the French Antilles, du Tertre has a section on the conversion of the Negroes to the Catholic Religion, and the zeal which they showed in it, once they had embraced it. He says there quite clearly that Baptism was available to the French Antillean slaves. "There is scarcely a Negro in all the French Antilles", he affirms, "that is not a Christian, scarcely one that they (the Missionaries) have not regenerated in the waters of Baptism". Having first gone out to the Antilles in 1640, and writing around 1666, he was able to say that more than fifteen thousand slaves had already been baptised in the French Isles. He adds that they would never have come to the knowledge of the True God in their own land.

Labat knew the French Antilles of some fifty years later. He served on the same Mission as du Tertre from 1694 to 1705, and did much travelling from island to island. For him, too, Baptism was available to the slaves of the Isles. Speaking of the small parish of Macouba in Martinique, of which he had charge at one time, he gives some religious statistics. Of the 110 Negroes on one estate, 8 adults had not been baptised; of the 696 Negroes, big and small, in the whole parish, 58 had not yet received the Sacrament of Baptism. Which proportions must have been comparatively good. He adds that, on Holy Saturday following his arrival at Macouba, he baptised 38 adult slaves, men and women.

Elsewhere in his book, Voyages Aux Isles De L'Amerique, Labat describes how the slaves who were already baptised treated newcomers from Africa. It was the custom, apparently, to lodge newcomers with old hands, those who were practising Christians. These, says Labat, would receive the new arrivals kindly, look after them well, and consider them as their own children. But they would not let them eat or sleep in the same room with themselves. When the newcomers asked the reason for this, they were told it was not possible, because they were not Christians. The old hands, he adds, would help the newcomers to prepare for Baptism and, as a rule, they stood as sponsors for them. He does mention, however, that at the Baptism of the 38 slaves at Macouba, most of the candidates had their masters as godfathers. 42

It must not be supposed that the Missionaries of the French Antilles baptised the slaves who arrived from Africa without due preparation. Speaking of the slaves captured from the Spaniards or Portuguese in his time, du Tertre says that the Negroes in question were generally already baptised. The Spaniards and Portuguese apparently made no difficulty about baptising them as soon as they had bought them in Africa, in the hope of instructing them later. But, he adds shrewdly, "people baptised like that know no more about our mysteries, and give us no less trouble to instruct, than those who have not been baptised at all."

On Sundays and Feasts, says du Tertre, there was a special Catechism Class for the slaves. They took pains to attend it, and missed it more through the fault of their masters, who gave them work to do, than through their own negligence. Those of the Negro children who had been born in the Isles, he adds, were as well instructed as the French children.

Labat also speaks of the Catechism Class for the slaves. At Macouba, he insisted with a certain estate manager and an overseer to have Catechism taught to the slaves on the estate, and to send them to Church early on Sundays and Feasts, so that he might instruct them, and prepare them for Baptism and the other Sacraments. He says that he did that on all the estates of his parish. In his day there was, in fact, regular catechetical instruction for the slaves during the week, in well-ordered estate houses. Such, he says, were most of the Windward Islands estate houses.

The instruction of the slaves must have been rather difficult sometimes. Some of the newcomers from Africa were idolaters, some were Mahometans, and many had no religion at all. Du Tertre says that some "adored no divinity whatsoever, and had never even reflected that there was a God." Perhaps it was easier for the Missionaries and other catechists to sow in the last kind of soil.⁴³

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Not only did the slaves of the French Antilles receive Baptism after proper instruction, thy also went to Mass, Confession and Holy Communion.

Speaking of the slaves of his day, du Tertre says: "They are exact in coming to Mass on Sundays and Feasts." He adds: "They frequent the Sacraments with great piety, and what would seem unbelievable in France, forms the ordinary object of our admiration in America." He explains by saying that the Missionaries saw the slaves going to Confession and Holy Communion very often: there were few Sundays or Feasts on which they did not see several Negroes, both men and women, practising their devotions.

From Labat's account of his missionary work in the French Antilles, one would also gather that the slaves there went to Mass and the Sacraments. Speaking of their predilection for Holy Water he has this: "With regard to Holy Water, however big the quantity of it one may make on Sundays at High Mass, one rarely finds a drop of it left when the service is over; they take it away in small 'calebasses'..." Which would seem to amount to saying that the slaves went regularly to High Mass on Sundays. As for their going to Confession and Holy Communion, Labat may also be adduced as a witness. He says that at Macouba he spent the week after Easter, and a part of the following week, in getting the slaves to make their Easter Duties—that is, to receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. "

Weeds grow in the best of gardens, and the weeds of superstition were to be found in the Garden of Religion in the French Antilles. Labat goes so far as to say that almost all the Negroes who arrived in the Isles from Africa as full-grown men, dabbled in sorcery. Perhaps that was an exaggeration. However, he relates a number of cases of witchcraft and the rest which lend weight to his thesis.

On one occasion Labat delayed baptising a certain Negro because he had heard from the slave's master that he dabbled in sorcery: he would find things that had got lost, practise divination, predict the arrival of vessels, and so on. At length, after making the man renounce any pacts he might have made with the Devil, and taking away his bag of tricks, Labat baptised him. For three months or so, all went well: the converted sorcerer was an exemplary Christian. Then, one Sunday morning, he went to the missionary, and implored him to give him back his bag of tricks: since he no longer practised his magic rites, he had been reduced to poverty and misery. Labat found out a lot about his wicked practices, smashed and burnt the little idol and other objects in his bag, and sent him to his master with a note.

Another case vouched for by Labat is that of a pagan boy who made use of certain incantations and magic rites in a presbytery garden in Martinique—and brought down a shower of rain on the garden during a drought! Four Dominican Fathers were witnesses of the event.

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Most dramatic of all in this connection, perhaps, is Labat's account of a visit he paid one night to the hut of a sick woman slave. He had heard that somebody who dabbled in medicine was in the hut, in spite of the fact that he, Labat, had told the woman to take remedies only from the doctor of the house. On arriving at the hut, he stopped outside and looked through the palissade of palm branches, to see what was going on inside. Strange things were going on. The sorcerer, for the medicine-man was that, was

kneeling before a little idol, incensing it, and addressing it. To all appearances, it was a case of Devil worship. 45

To end on a happier note, here is what du Tertre says of the slaves who became Christians in the French Antilles as a group: "The Negroes are certainly touched by God's grace, for they remain faithful until death to the Religion they have embraced; they practise its virtues and perform its good works; and I can say in truth that they live the Christian life more perfectly in their condition than many French people".46

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The Place of Radio in the West Indies

WILLY RICHARDSON

THE invention of wireless has brought to the entire world a new dimension of civilisation. Never before in history have so many people had the opportunity to come into contact with other peoples, some of them living thousands of miles away, following different customs, speaking different languages, but in their particular ways, all manifesting aspects of the human spirit in its never ending search for a distant goal. We in the West Indies have shared some of the benefits of this invention. At first it served to bring us the detailed accounts of Inter-Colonial cricket; this was followed by a period when the news of the day became the dominant theme; and gradually over the last quarter of a century, the more advanced techniques of the medium have been attempted. There are many signs that the people and their Governments have become very conscious of the part that radio could play in the development of a country, and in many parts of the Federation a new relationship in developing between those who are responsible for radio and those who listen to its offerings. Much more attention is being paid to form and content, and listeners are I think becoming more critical of the programmes they hear. The soap-operas and the long playing imitations of jazz are still with us, but a more serious note has begun to creep in and with care and goodwill, it should be possible in a matter of years to make radio in the West Indies a vital contributor to the educational and cultural development of the nation. The Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation, the Windward Islands Broadcasting Service, the new attempts of the commercial stations to achieve the regionalisation of news and feature programmes, the deliberate provision of accurate accounts of governmental activity by the Information Services-all these are straws which indicate that we may be on the eve of a new period in which the wireless set would perform the task of bringing to the people of the West Indies the best that has been known and thought in the World-to use Matthew Arnold's definition of culture.

In the last twenty years or so, many young West Indians have had an opportunity to understand the real value of good broadcasting through the Caribbean Service of the B.B.C. Take our writers for example—Edgar Mittelholzer. Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, Vidia Naipaul, Andrew Salkey, Neville Dawes—much of their early work was first published by "Caribbean Voices", a literary programme edited by that most sympathetic and friendly of editors, Henry Swanzy, at a time when, save for the West Indian literary magazine Bim, there was no other outlet for West Indian writing. And they were paid for their work. For a short story which took approximately thirteen minutes to read, a writer would get between ten and fifteen guineas. In short, the writers who contributed to this radio programme were treated as professionals and paid accordingly. But far more important than the financial recompense was the fact that their work was broadcast to a wide audience, and they could get the stimulation and incentives to proceed further, as well as the recognition without which the lonely business of writing can be a very frustrating experience.

If the B.B.C., broadcasting to the West Indies one weekly half-hour literary programme could have found time for all these writers, why was it not possible for radio organisations in the West Indies to do likewise? Why is it so difficult even today for the people of the West Indies to hear their own writers on the local air? Now that the programme "Caribbean Voices" has come to an end, where is the outlet for the new West Indian writer for the publication of his early work, when he is experimenting with style and finding the sources of his inspiration and discovering his subjects and characters?

One does not wish to pursue only this line of enquiry for there are those who claim that literary programmes are only enjoyed by a comparatively small audience, and might argue that commercial sponsors would not be forthcoming to risk the selling of their products to the sensitive hands of literary tyros. It is necessary therefore to analyse in greater detail the kind of society that we have in The West Indies today and try to learn what are the needs of the mass audience in the islands and how best they can be supplied. A preliminary undertaking would be a thorough survey of the extent of listening in the region and the reaction to the programmes which it is possible to hear at present. Some years ago, at the Post Office in Trinidad, there was a messenger whose hobby was collecting gramophone records, and who surprised everyone by the catholicity of his tastes in classical music. I suspect that there are many people in The West Indies who are less than satisfied that a maximum effort is being made to bring them what they enjoy and deserve.

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There has been in the West Indies for more than a hundred years an avid thirst for education, and one of the gratifying and sometimes alarming symptoms of the developing communities was the fervour with which thousands of children attended the elementary schools which were provided by the Church, by the Government and private individuals. But unfortunately for the vast majority of these students, there was a narrowly based curriculum and a system of examinations which stimulated a fierce competitiveness and cramming of a few basic subjects. The child of today has much greater opportunities of gaining a secondary education and it is possible that already many parents are taking a firm stand against the rigorous disciplines of the past. The parent of today wants his children to have an awareness and love of the arts, music, singing and dancing as well as the facts of geography, history and the traditional routine. They are beginning to realise that there need not be anything routine about the educational processes. Quite recently the Ministry of Education in Trinidad embarked on an ambitious project of school-broadcasting, similar to previous projects in Jamaica and British Guiana and the Windward Islands. Three times a week a programme is prepared and broadcast to a number of schools who are equipped with wireless sets for the purpose of listening to them. These programmes are not intended to relieve the teachers; they can help by trying to stimulate the imagination of the pupils and by presenting in a graphic form the background to the particular subject that the teacher is tackling. At the other end of the educational scale is the Radio Education Unit of the University College of the West Indies, which produces a wide range of programmes aimed at supplementing the work of the Extra Mural Department of the University. These programmes are capable of meeting the needs of many more people than those for whom they are designed, but are not always able to find their way into the peak listening periods of the radio stations. Even when we succeed in getting the school and education broadcasts on a firm footing within the West Indies, we will still be behind the modern Western societies which have long since mastered the techniques of sound broadcasting for schools and are now using the more comprehensive medium of television to achieve the same fundamental aims.

One of the greatest challenges that has confronted the West Indies in its long history is the post-war effort to create a national sense in the islands which would make the political and economic arrangements a conscious organisation of a deep-seated want. Radio can play an effective part in stimulating this sense of nationhood. The Federation-wide hook-up which permitted the Federal Elections to be broadcast throughout the Caribbean on the 25th March, 1958, as well as the broadcast of the Inauguration of the Federal Parliament and subsequent openings of Parliament, showed how attentive the peoples of the West Indies would be as long as there was a programme to excite their interest and appeal to their imagination. When the Governor-General made his first historic tour of the islands, the Government Information Services co-operated in a joint venture which produced ten feature programmes of all the islands of the Federation. And more recently there have been regular inter-island exchanges of news aimed at giving each island a better idea of how its neighbours live and behave. These attempts constitute only a beginning of what is necessary. It is not difficult to calculate what would be the benefits of a national news bulletin broadcast four times daily simultaneously to all the territories of the West Indies, making each citizen aware that an economic windfall in one island will have an effect throughout the area, or that a disaster in any one place would be the signal for a national rallying of resources to succour the stricken ones. We are fortunate in that we have the unifying force of a common language in all the islands and would not be faced with some of the broadcasting problems which beset a country like Ghana where the news has to be transmitted in English, Ga, Twi, Fante, and Ewe, all national languages of the Republic. At present there are technical barriers which make regional broadcasting a costly and laborious business. It would take a transmitter of considerable power to cover all the islands of the Federation, and at the present time it is difficult to see how the recurrent expenses of a national station of this kind could be met. It is possible however to produce programmes and make multiple copies on tape for distribution to the various stations. But this can only be successful with material which is not easily dated and obviates the provision of news, current affairs, up-to-the-minute commentaries and the events of the day which is the main stuff of radio.

Already we have observed the potential influence that radio can exert as an instrument of political persuasion. Many countries have realised the value of radio in promoting greater understanding of democratic forms and techniques. There are many kinds of programmes that a national system could organise—discussions between people of conflicting political views, commentaries on the events of the day by independent observers, party political broadcasts in which the chief spokesmen of opposed parties would interpret their political philosophies and programmes for the benefit of the electorate, as well as exercises

in which the intellectuals would propound the ideas which have made history and stood up to the test of time. The talkers and thinkers are there; the audience is there, and we can only hope that in the not too distant future the machinery will be there to make radio one of the strongest promoters of our national ideals and our Federal aspirations. That this is not idle chatter can be proved by anyone who cares to study the role of the British Broadcasting Corporation in the United Kingdom or what the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation achieved in unifying the ten provinces of Canada. Nearly every emergent nation in Africa has been quick to perceive the vital contribution that radio could make in developing their country and thev have been prepared to spend time and thought and money in providing adequate radio services capable of reaching into the poorest part of the forest or desert as well as into the towns where the people wait for the riches that radio can bring to all. Most national systems of broadcasting try to achieve the aim of educating, informing and entertaining the public. The first two are easy to define but entertainment is a far trickier proposition, and one can set up the elaborate system at maximum cost and never succeed in achieving the third aim. The problem is that the sophisticated listener is never a captive one and he can always resort to the knob that switches the whole thing off. This is why any programme organiser, station manager or producer must take continual pains to prevent his listeners getting bored. No matter how much a listener wants to be educated or informed. he is not going to be satisfied unless a deliberate attempt is made to "sugar the pill." The more advanced broadcasting organisations who are fully aware of this have found it necessary to pay particular attention to the problems of production and even the cleverest broadcasters have learned that it pays in the long run to listen to their advice and accept the hints which they offer with the purest motives and the most disarming manners. One of our needs in the West Indies, as far as broadcasting is concerned is to appreciate the role of the producer in radio and to be prepared to pay the extra amount to assure that the services can be produced of these midwives of healthy radiogenic material. A constant difficulty is the question of cost, and small stations have to struggle on, depending on canned programmes for bolstering the main structure of news records and commercials.

It would be churlish to overlook the efforts that have been made in broadcasting in the last quarter of a century in The West Indies, but as we stand on the threshold of nationhood we have to improve on past endeavours and ensure that we make use of all our resources. It is clear that much more thought is being given at present to the role of radio in the new West Indian society than at any other time in our history. And there is no dramatic conflict being posed of public service broadcasting versus commercial radio as was fought out in Britain after the second world war. For it is obvious that at present the gross domestic product is not large enough to permit of any major undertaking in the fields of broadcasting and television without the help of private enterprise. This need not be regarded as the thin edge, for the Canadians have managed, by taking thought and experimenting with various methods to evolve a system which is today regarded as one of the best in the world, maintaining public service ideals and permitting controlled advertising which does its job of selling commodities without any gross affront to cultivated tastes.

There is room in broadcasting for all men of good will. There are very few who believe that the only reason for the medium's existence is to sell time; on the other hand only the most rabid of dichards or revolutionaries can conceive of it as an instrument only for propaganda. And the people themselves, in the several islands of the Federation for many of whom it is their chief contact with the outside world or their only means of enriching their intellectual and cultural lives have faith that in time they too will be able to tune into a West Indian station which will speak with their accents, which will be familiar with the idiom of the streets and the fashions of the seminars, which will reflect their lives in poetry and drama, which will record their lively songs and encourage the making of symphonies from the folk material around, which will tell them about the significance of the times in which we live and will relate the progress of their nation to wider efforts of the whole of mankind. This is the kind of station which will be not only a bringer but a hallmark of our culture.

The Turks and Caicos Islands—Some Impressions of an English Visitor

DOREEN COLLINS

At the far south-eastern tip of the Bahamas lie a small group of coral islands known as the Turks and Caicos. The Turks Islands are reputed to get their names from a large, handsome cactus, topped with a scarlet flower, shaped like a fez and which led an early explorer to suppose these islands covered with war-like Turks ever ready to repel invaders. These islands are not fertile; they have few trees and are covered with pear-bush cactus and similar delights of nature. The soil is poor and there is no source of fresh water except the rain which is scanty and not infrequently has to be rationed. On the other hand, the climate is delightful to live in for the trade winds prevent the summer heat becoming oppressive and the winter temperature never falls below the sixties. The beaches are excellent and the sea would delight the heart of any swimmer whether on top or under the water.

Many years ago, Englishmen from Bermuda sailed down for the summer to rake salt, for the islands have great natural advantages in the production of a pure salt by solar evaporation. It was for these journeys that the special Bermudan rigging was devised. In time, some hardy spirits decided to stay and moved down with families and slaves to build themselves handsome colonial-style houses along the water fronts which provided storage for the salt downstairs and airy living quarters up above. Here they settled and for 150 years made a good living for themselves and their dependents; forming a close-knit social community with much visiting back and forth amongst the islands and a complicated criss-cross of relationships created by inter-marriage. Supported by an abundant supply of labour, they lived the life of an elite in an environment subject to very little change. It is only since the second world war that the traditional pattern of life thus established has suffered serious alterations.

Another source of permanent settlement of the islands was from the southern states of America, when a number of Loyalist planters, mainly from Georgia, obtained from the Crown grants of land in the Caicos Islands. Here they attempted to perpetuate their customary mode of life and to grow cotton, sisal and fruits. These plantations were not a success for the soil was too poor, and the rainfall too scanty and uncertain. The hurricane of 1811 was the real death-blow to these ventures and in the ensuing years the white population began to move away leaving behind them small settlements of their ex-slaves whose isolation and poverty is today keenly felt.

These two sources of settlement have given certain differences of outlook to the inhabitants which persist even today. Caicos folk, who eke out a frugal living from the soil and fishing, consider themselves more hard-working, independent and capable than the Turks islander who grows nothing. Their

family connections and natural inclinations are towards the Bahamas which received a similar influx of population at the time of the War of Independence and with which the islands were once politically associated. On the Turks Islands, however, the people have different memories. They have a history of business prosperity to remember; the sale of salt brought them into contact with the Eastern seaboard of America, with the fishing industries of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, with the practice of commerce and trade and they thus tend to look upon the Caicos dwellers as unsophisticated countrymen. The capital, Grand Turk Island, has also had the more exciting history. Commanding an important sea passage for the area, it was captured by the French during the Revolutionary wars and an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge them was one of the young Nelson's few failures. Inevitably, it was a resting place for pirates who seem to have been accorded a universally warm welcome by the inhabitants. Vivid stories of these times are told by their descendants with such wealth of detail that it is difficult to believe that they were not really there.

In 1799, the Crown placed the Turks and Caicos under the Bahamas government but at this time the yoke of alien rule sat uneasily on the salt makers. As the outermost islands in the Bahamian chain and at a time when communications were so much slower and more uncertain than today, the thought that they were getting but a raw deal from the capital was almost inevitable. In any case, the salt industry was prosperous and the owners proud and independent people. There appeared nothing that Nassau could do for them that they could not do as well or better for themselves and in 1848 the islands began a period of self-government. The experience of that time taught a lesson which is still relevant for today; for even in the middle of the nineteenth century when the islands had money and governments were not so welfare-minded, the islanders found themselves committed to a burden which they could not sustain. Partly because the planter element was no longer significant and partly through pride, twenty-five years later the islands were annexed to Jamaica with whom the islands are still connected and whose Governor is their Governor. Whilst retaining a considerable degree of independence in arranging their own affairs, the link with Jamaica provides considerable administrative support, a monopoly of the Jamaican coarse salt market which in the present state of the salt industry is of great importance; as well as a market for all the sisal which is produced in the Caicos. In 1959, 28 per cent of the value of the exports went to Jamaica.

For many years now the islands have been economically depressed. When salt was only obtainable by solar evaporation, the Turks Island product found its markets easily for it is of high quality, but the opening up of salt mines in the United States and Canada provided an easier and more convenient method of production. Neither is trade with Newfoundland and Nova Scotia any longer what it was. A flourishing trade was once carried on with ships, principally sailing schooners, which came down from the North with fish and took back salt for the curing. The war saw the last of the schooners and disrupted this trading pattern which has never been seriously resumed. The fish now goes elsewhere and a great deal of the salt used for fish curing comes from Portugal and Spain.

Along with the decline in markets are production problems which can largely, though not entirely, be summed up in the phrase "the need for modernisation." Salt production at Grand Turk and Salt Cay is still mainly carried on by traditional methods which mean heavy reliance upon hand labour rather than machines. Whilst it is picturesque to see men working in the salt ponds with pick and shovel, or the donkey carts ambling along to the storage sheds with their loads of salt; whilst it is awe-inspiring to view the salt-washing machine carved by hand out of a tree trunk or the pumping engine patched up with discarded parts from anywhere in the islands; the amount that can be produced under such conditions must inevitably be small. However, substantial investment has been made in recent years from Colonial Development and Welfare funds in modern handling equipment at Cockburn Harbour, the largest producer, from which the benefits are now being received. The manufacture of fine salt for the West Indies is presently planned, but this also will require considerable new investment. To problems of production are added problems of loading. Since none of the salt islands has a natural harbour of depth, salt must be taken out to any ship that calls for a cargo on small lighters or on barges, and then re-loaded in the open sea where stormy weather conditions make this frequently difficult and some times impossible. If one harbour could be deepened and the salt thus removed more quickly, one obstacle to selling would be overcome. Even with such capital investment however, it is not certain that the salt industry would pay its way for production must remain comparatively small and is carried on in three small islands separated from each other by open sea which must always complicate the business of management.

It is some time since the salt owners first saw the writing on the wall, but even after salt ceased to show a profit they were enabled to hold on to their economic and social predominance in the islands since they also handled trade in an area where most necessities and all luxuries have to be imported. It was from their shops that the old families now made their money, but by the 1940's it was clear that none was wealthy enough or willing enough, or operated on a sufficiently large scale, to sink into the salt industry as a whole the capital which could be the only source of its continuance.

By 1951, therefore, salt had been taken over by the Government and with one accord the biggest salt owners departed with their compensation leaving the Turks Island Government to do the best it could with a defunct and decaying industry. It now falls to the lot of the Administrator, a Colonial civil servant, to enter the business world in addition to administering the island. Whether in public or private hands, the basic problem of making the salt competitive remains and this must now ultimately mean more money from the British taxpayer to equip the industry properly if the chances of it remaining on its feet are thereby made reasonably good.

With the decline of salt, many have looked to emigration as a preferable alternative to the tiny unemployment pay which is all the government can afford. All the islanders are great seafarers and employment on the shipping lines is eagerly sought though not so readily obtained. In any case, if after a few years a man wishes to return home to settle down, the old problem of how

he is to support himself and his family remains. Jamaica is beset by unemployment problems of her own and can afford no help and therefore many eyes are turned to the Bahamas where there are natural geographic and family links and which, with the development of tourism, are at present booming. Unfortunately, the Bahamian Government does not allow unrestricted entry into its islands. Despite the difficulties, emigration does take place and it is unusual to meet anyone without one member of the immediate family at sea. in America, Bermuda, or the Bahamas. But this, of course, in turn creates problems at home for a large part of the adult male population can be abroad and often the brighter and the more alert who could be expected to make an effective contribution to life on the islands. This process has gone furthest on the Caicos Islands which have least to offer the stay-at-home but which, because of their isolation, need the active and intelligent citizens to provide the initiative and leadership in the community life on which all in large part must depend. Hurricane Donna has recently passed over the Caicos. Here is a population of over 2,000, living in settlements of four or five hundred souls.

The tiny stone walled cottages with thatched roofs are but a poor protection in times such as these. For many there is no doctor, nurses or clergymen. Supplies used to come in by sailing boat but now all save two are damaged or destroyed. The sisal farms are spoiled and a large part of the population is homeless. The Government is operating an emergency relief scheme to feed the settlements, restore the boats, rebuild the houses, and in the process of rehabilitation it must be left largely to the community to allocate supplies and to see that they are sensibly used.

There is much discussion at the moment on the political future of the islands. Considerable sums of money come today from the United Kingdom in the form of Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes and Grant-in-aid but the islanders wonder if they will fare so well when the grant of independence becomes general over the West Indies. Having been taken into the Federation by virtue of the link with Jamaica, the shakiness of Jamaican membership has inevitably had repercussions in the islands. Without a champion at federal level, the chances of the Turks and Caicos getting much consideration are felt to be small indeed but they might not be much better if the islands remained linked with an independent Jamaica unless they were offered a wider monopoly of the salt trade than they have at present. In any event, the Jamaican connection has never been felt to fit very comfortably and has been accepted faute de mieux rather than for any other reason. Two other possibilities arise. One is to be re-absorbed into the Bahamas and there is a strong body of opinion in favour of this because of the natural links and because this would give free entry into an area of prosperity. This solution, were the Bahamas to agree, and it is not easy to see any very strong immediate reason why they should, would not however be pleasing to everybody. To some, it would be a solution by "returning Turks Island to the Dark Ages" and as such would be resented if not directly opposed. The final possibility to be canvassed is that of some direct link with England. Apart from the need for subsidy, most islanders would agree that it is impracticable for them to be completely independent for they are too small to support and staff developing public services.

At this level, however, it would seem sensible to say that the link must be a local one. To train a new police constable, to proffer advice on a community centre or women's group, to provide assistance after a hurricane are all jobs for which some bigger authority near at hand is necessary. Sometimes, too one feels that the desire for an English link is only tenable because England is far away enough to be surrounded by a roseate haze of goodness, benevolence and wisdom. Turks Islanders consider themselves better than most people and have never really reconciled to being a dependency of one of their neighbours. Whilst the overriding factor in this problem must be the economic one of how the islands are to continue to exist, the visitor senses in these discussions the existence of an emotional gap which is waiting to be filled. The departure of the salt owners marked the end of a traditional society in which both white and black, educated and uneducated, kept their places and knew their station and which showed both the good and the bad of a benevolent autocracy. Now the backbone of that society has gone and for every one person who will say "we are more democratic nowadays" there is another to say "nobody cares about us any more" or "we were better off in the old days". Many of them have not yet accustomed themselves to the fact that there is no longer an upper layer of society to provide them with jobs, to run the Sunday school and the choir and to set the tone of society in all essential ways and therefore the idea of a link with England is attractive partly because it would give a sense of security and "belonging".

The wonderful dream which is beginning to excite some minds is the development of tourism but this is a road beset with hazards even if the ultimate goal be desirable. It is true that the wave of tourism, especially American, is beating steadily south but before it could be diverted to the Turks and Caicos there are formidable difficulties to be overcome. There is no water supply, there are no hotels, food must be imported, transport is difficult. It would require large-scale investment and considerable faith on the part of the first investors and whilst the first few nibbles have come from interested speculators, no solid bite has yet materialised. But many people who have long left the islands are holding on to their houses or their land; some are even buying land in the hope that in the years to come values will have soared. This development would probably be hastened if the islands were absorbed into the Bahamas which appear to have pinned their faith to this particular mast, but an over-dependence on tourism would be deplored by many as a precarious solution to the economic problem at the cost of undermining the solidarity of social values.

There does not seem to be an immediate and certainly not an easy answer to the islands' future. Apart from permanent subsidy, which is difficult to justify and would be distasteful, the answer for the moment seems to be in salt for which the industry will require money which it is not certain will show a return. The alternative is to let the islands decline but as long as emigration is difficult this can hardly be adopted as official policy. Thus whilst superficially the islands are a tropical paradise, underneath are familiar strains and stresses caused mainly by the inevitability of economic change which make the future uncertain and somewhat hazardous.

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